Violence as negation of potential in the works of Hannah Arendt, Albert Camus, and Frantz Fanon: From Totalitarianism and Colonialism to Biopolitics

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Abstract

This thesis argues that political violence can be broadly conceptualised as negation of human potential. The analysis bypasses essentialist definitions of violence and prioritises instead the function of violence in relation to the political experiences of subjects. The thesis examines the works of Hannah Arendt, Albert Camus and Frantz Fanon and interprets their views on violence by focusing on its political function and effects on subjects. The main claim is that all three thinkers, despite their differences, agree that violence negates the potential of subjects to act and express themselves in certain ways, which involves spontaneity and creative initiative. This is shown through Arendt's concept of natality, Camus's concept of rebellion and Fanon's idea of reshaping subjectivities through anticolonial struggle. The thesis argues that violence negates potential because of the unpredictability and insecurity that spontaneous action entails and this goes against the three thinkers' views on humanism. It demonstrates how Arendt, Camus and Fanon espouse political resistance through novel creative action in order to break the circle of violence that rests upon repetition and reaction. Violence is examined in the context of politics in totalitarianism and colonialism, complemented by an analysis of violence in biopolitics though a discussion of the thoughts of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben. In this way, the thesis reveals the links between totalitarianism, colonialism and biopolitics, by emphasising the role of violence that negates human potential, which is common to all these political constellations.

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Introduction

This thesis is concerned with violence. The concept of violence has always been central in philosophical and political thought but, despite its importance, there is an obvious lack of clarity in the literature when it comes to understanding violent phenomena. One obvious reason has to do to with the definition of violence itself. Definitions of violence may face criticism for being too broad or being too narrow; not being easily measurable or neglecting invisible manifestations; straying into theological roots or being ahistorical. Despite the abundance of both theoretical and empirical work on violence, one only has to spend a day at a library trying to use theoretical approaches to understand violence in the real world to see what the problem with the concept of violence is. Violence is interpersonal but also structural, it can be symbolic, cultural, religious, gendered, epistemic; it can refer to war, terrorism, the police, riots, genocide. The list can become much longer, making it even more surprising that, despite multiple approaches and theories of violence existing, these remain fragmented and prohibit a meaningful dialogue among approaches.

Similar complex phenomena, such as power, are better conceptualised and understood even if this is done through "intellectual compromise". Different typologies of power provide multiple understandings of what power is, but still allow study to take place within this broad context. Scholars, for example, who might favour the concept "power to" or "power over", concern themselves with multiple "faces" or functions of power (Lukes, 2005; Barnett and Duvall, 2005; Berenskoetter and Williams, 2007) but they are less likely to disagree that all approaches are meaningful, and they often employ multiple manifestations of power in their work. When it comes to violence, this conceptual context does not exist, or it exists in a highly fragmented manner which renders it unfunctional. This is perplexing, given that power is a concept which

is usually discussed alongside or even interchangeably to the concept of violence. It is possible that the key difference between the two concepts is that the one is considered a highly desirable outcome, while the other is a problem associated with crisis and in need of resolution. Therefore, it is possible that our analytical instincts prompt us to understand power in its various manifestations with the aim to maximize them and, contrary to this, we approach violence after we have identified a problem that needs to be contained and solved.

Even though "expanding" on violence sounds counterintuitive, voices in the literature do suggest refraining from a view of violence as a set of discrete events and shedding more light to the invisible interdependencies between its various forms (Staudigl, 2014). In other words, there must be a broader understanding–not a concrete definition– of violence that covers all the different manifestations of the phenomenon and this thesis wishes to contribute to this aim. The thesis is interested neither in producing a definition that will capture the essence of violence nor a typology that will bring together all possible manifestations of the phenomenon. Instead, the aim is to conceptualise the role of violence in politics or, as it will soon be explained, the way in which violence functions politically.

The first question that arises with this quest is whether the aforementioned interdependencies and invisible links can be uncovered in a meaningful way. One plausible challenge may lie in the difficulty of conceptualising violence itself. Dodd (2017, p.17) has argued that violence 'tends to unsettle the very process of its own conceptualisation' because of its liminal character and its tendency to disrupt any sense of continuity. At least from a phenomenological perspective, violence cannot fit neatly into a definition restricted to its concrete manifestations, without accounting for the distortion and disintegration it causes. First, this means we are dealing with a negative phenomenon, as explained earlier in the comparison to the concept of

power. Therefore, besides looking into what violence looks like, by producing a definition for example, it is also crucial to understand the effects of violence. Second, this suggests that one of the reasons why the problem of conceptualising violence does not play a more prominent role in relevant literature is exactly the fact that violence is still widely discussed and researched in a manner that is bypassing the fragility of its definition. In other words, key debates on violence emphasize problems associated with violence without engaging with the phenomenon itself.

I do not argue here that there is not enough research on political violence. On the contrary, there are too many fragmented approaches, each one of them revealing only a small part of the phenomenon. This is not a problem when a definition is needed to communicate research on a specific area, but it poses the danger of misrecognising violence when it manifests itself. I argue that we need to go beyond a plethora of tailored definitions of violence and instead try to understand the key function of violence. This concern has been raised in various instances in the literature. Evans and Carver (2017, p.2) argue that the complex phenomenon of violence, which defies neat description, should be approached not through 'the already moralising and normatively loaded question' of what political violence is, but rather contemplate on how violence functions politically. Schinkel (2010, p.3) comments on how 'there is no one perspective that captures the concept of violence accurately'; he suggests an ontological understanding of violence as a "reduction of being". Cavarero also (2008, p.32) argues that "linguistic innovation" is necessary in order to understand violence that goes beyond harm and death and represents "offence at the ontological level". Balibar (2015) is also interested in extreme forms of violence in the form of cruelty and discusses ultraobjective and ultrasubjective violence; the first functions as treating human beings as useless remnants and the second portrays them as incarnations of evil that threatens the subject from within. All these

scholars confirm the importance of emphasizing how violence functions and the effects it has on subjects. In this way violence can be understood not by what it looks like but through the way it operates and affects subjects, which is the aim of this thesis.

In addition, it is far from bold to claim that there is a tendency in the literature to see concepts as tools that can help scholars establish claims on phenomena they want to shed light on. The simpler and the more widely used a definition is, the easier it becomes to communicate research and find a place in academic debates. Aspiring to produce a hybrid account of interpersonal and structural approaches to violence, Vorobej (2016, p.154) comments that in the endeavour to define violence 'it all depends on what you want your account of violence to do for you'. A conceptual toolkit of violence can be useful for those who want to label and theorise the particular phenomenon of violence they investigate; approaching the phenomenon in question will be enriched by empirical insight that can fill any conceptual gaps. However, it is not always the case that a particular definition of violence, in any of its various forms, can tell us whether there is violence involved in any given context. For example, one can use the definition and theory of civil war to approach a particular conflict in a war-stricken country, but it is far more complicated to look at an everyday scene in that country and reckon that violence is present, when no fighting takes place. There are too many ways in which one can experience violence and existing definitions only shed light on one or some of these ways.

There is of course the concept of structural violence which could fill this gap; however, this could bring us back into the loop of defining violence without really understanding how it functions. Structural violence is a useful concept, but it has often been criticized for being too broad and vague (Dilts, 2012). However, the key issue according to this thesis is that simply locating structural constraints promotes the idea of a form of passive violence, something that

conceals the severe and dynamic effects violence has on subjects. Accepting the fact that human agency is extremely complex goes hand in hand with the fact that constraints on agency cannot be seen as static. Structural constraints are constantly renegotiated, politicized and perceived in various ways, so that individuals cannot be simply seen as victims or pawns of violent structural processes; the question is whose agency matters when we talk about structural violence (Hume and Wilding, 2020).

When Johan Galtung introduced the concept of structural violence, his main question was actually peace. Galtung was not exclusively concerned with producing a definition or typology of violence but aimed to 'indicate theoretically significant dimensions of violence' (Galtung, 1969, p.168). By defining peace as the absence of violence it is not surprising he ended up with a conceptualisation of violence based on negation and denial: 'Violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations'. (Galtung, 1969, p.168). Galtung put forward his direct-structural-cultural violence triangle, according to which, besides direct, physical violence, there is indirect structural violence that relates to social injustice, repression and exploitation, and cultural violence which is symbolic but serves to legitimize the other two types (Galtung, 1996).

In a sense, Galtung's approach is interesting because he considered primarily not what violence looks like but what the absence of violence would look like. This means, first, that he allowed for a conceptualisation that does not see violence as an ontological necessity; unsurprisingly, Galtung repeatedly emphasized the term "avoidable" to describe human suffering and social constraints. Second, his defence of an extended definition of violence lies in the relation it has to "opposite" concepts such as peace. If peace is the absence of violence and we accept a

narrow definition of violence being direct and physical, then many oppressive social orders could be seen as compatible with peace.

Nevertheless, perhaps the most crucial aspect of Galtung's understanding of violence, which has not become prominent enough in the literature, is that his definition does not focus on what violence looks like but in what way it functions: "violence is that which increases the distance between the potential and the actual" (Galtung, 1969, p.168). Such focus on the political function of violence represents both an inspiration and an aspiration of this thesis; my aim is to understand the political function of violence by exploring its effects on subjects and I try to do so by following Galtung's reliance on both concepts of negation and potential. As it will become clear, I wish to establish my argument by reinterpreting some of the most seminal political theory works on violence from the perspective of potential and examine the function of violence as a negation of it. This is necessary for two reasons: first, because I wish to move further from Galtung's view of human potential as a synonym of "development", which is a very contested term itself; second, because Galtung's idea of violence is promising but has neglected the role of the subject in the effort to shed light on structural violence.

To clarify this, as stated earlier, Galtung understands violence as limitations to somatic and mental realisations that prevent humans from reaching their full potential. Galtung's theorisation of violence served the purpose of bringing attention to social justice and the end of, not only interpersonal violence, but of avoidable human suffering in general. Indeed, lack of violence is a prerequisite for human well-being. Galtung tried to explain that inhuman living conditions may still be present without war and aggression. Peace should not be seen as the absence of warfare, but as conditions of unhindered human development, both physical and mental.

However, a further question arises on whether there can be violence and negation of human potential even when one's well-being is guaranteed. This is a question central to the last chapter of the thesis, which discusses the paradox of biopolitical violence today. Following Michel Foucault and his concept of pastoral power (Foucault, 1982), I wish to go beyond Galtung's idea of human potential which I read as problematically close to notions of well-being and development. Pastoral power looks after both the community and the individual but, as all power relations, it always carries the danger of domination: "it implies a knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it" (ibid, p.783). Beyond feeding bodies and educating minds there is the conscience of subjects, which is the core of the political subject and makes human potential a political issue, specifically one of agency. In other words, even in conditions of apparent peace, where individuals' well-being seems to be the priority of institutions, it is still possible to observe a negation of human potential. Bringing the subject back to our attention is necessary in order to achieve a holistic approach to the function of violence.

Still, the question of what human potential is remains. Galtung does not define potential, but by referring to "the distance between the potential and the actual" it is clear that he is borrowing the Aristotelian idea of potentiality, as it has commonly been established in scholarly work. Aristotle has identified potentiality and actuality as properties of every being. All beings fulfil themselves towards perfection (without ever reaching it) by completing actions that they have the potential for, and at that stage this potential is actualised. Accordingly, one general definition of potentiality in the literature suggests that 'the manifestation of a potentiality is that property which the potentiality's possessor would possess if the potentiality were to be manifested' (Vetter, 2015, p.101). A good example is

learning to play a musical instrument, eventually having the potential to do so. However, potentiality is not always consumed by its actualisation; this means that one can master an art and then decide not to perform it. One could decide not to play the piano even if there is potential to do so; potential does not always need to be actualised.

This makes potentiality more interesting as it is related to power but also freedom. In other words, a human being can exercise a power or not exercise it; one may decide to act or not act. This idea has been central to the thought of Giorgio Agamben, whose work is discussed in the last chapter. Agamben challenged Aristotelian potentiality and actuality by refusing the primacy of the later over the former, and by stating that human beings do not have an inherent potential they must fulfil; human beings should be seen as beings of potential (Stimilli, 2021). Therefore, potentiality is not only a potential for actualisation: it is simply an "open" potential, and it can remain as such. Therefore, making sense of negated human potential is not as simple as accounting for the potential that we would expect a human being to fulfil "normally" because potential is deeply embedded in human subjectivity and not simply a set of expectations of subjectively determined human needs. We can therefore agree on what potential stands for but not define exactly what human potential is, as it appears in an unexpected and spontaneous manner.

This thesis sides with this view of potential as an open concept and does not rely on a specific definition of potentiality or human potential. I will be using the term "potential" to avoid giving the impression that the argument sides with a specific definition or approach to Aristotle's "potentiality". A key reason for this is to avoid the danger that Agamben points out, which is to arbitrarily assume there is a predetermined potential to be fulfilled for every human being (Holten-Jensen, 2006). Instead, the thesis wishes to emphasize the agency of

subjects, similar to Sartre's existentialist suggestion that potentiality is located in the spontaneous actions of human agency: it is inextricably tied to the subject and its own consciousness (Barnes, 1992, p.24). Nevertheless, this does not mean that human potential is exactly the same as agency, in the sense of freedom to choose between a number of options, i.e., possibilities. Possibility is not identical with potential, and external conditions may determine if a capacity can be realised, but this does not determine the existence of this capacity (Attell, 2009). Human beings do not exercise their agency in a world free from constrains and they are not the only ones who determine the fulfilment of their potential. As the thesis argues, violence serves to negate some aspects of human potential, hence directly affecting human subjectivity.

In addition, it is not only Galtung but also the key thinkers examined in this thesis who do not offer an explicit theory or definition of human potential. It is in fact an ambition of the thesis to point out the importance of human potential in the work of Arendt, Camus and Fanon, even though they are not explicitly mentioning this concept. Each one of the thinkers has maintained their own broad understanding of human potential. For Arendt, it will be shown, potential lies in the fact of human natality, as a new human being is brought to the world and has the potential to change it through novel, unpredictable action. By extension, potentiality also lies in political plurality because many different actors can reveal themselves and their potential in the public sphere, affecting and inspiring others. In both cases, the key concept that emphasises human potential is that of action (in the sense of actualisation) which confirms the influence of Aristotelian thought on Arendt. Arendt has emphasised action and its unpredictability as key characteristics of human potential. For example, Arendt has claimed that 'power is always a power potential and not an unchangeable, measurable and reliable entity […]. It can only be actualized but never fully materialized' (1998, p.200). This

clarifies further the affinity between agency and potential, while confirms that the two concepts are not identical. For Arendt, humans are born with the potential to act, to generate political power and use it in many different unpredictable ways, but they might decide not to do so, by avoiding political action, or they might be prevented from doing so by those who dominate them.

In Camus's work also the concept of potential is latent, even though Camus's thought is dedicated to spontaneous action and the potential it entails as the thesis will show. Perhaps due to his existentialist intellectual origins, Camus was always preoccupied with the idea of human agency and freedom. The concept of agency is mainly discussed as moral agency in the search of a set of values that can protect against violence and promote humanism and solidarity. These values that will guide one's life are meant to be the product of individual judgment, revealing one's potential to think differently and find the meaning of life individual (Lincoln, 2011). Therefore, human potential is best exposed in the confrontation of the absurd. Absurdity, a central theme in Camus's work, is a key obstacle to exercising moral agency and what pushes one to nihilism and violence. I will argue that it is the potential to be involved in the world, experience the world and others, and be creative that Camus offers as a solution to nihilistic violence. In other words, potential in the work of Camus is the potential to live as a rebel, creating one's values and being in a constant state of rebellion against the absurdity of the human condition. Moreover, Camus's break with Sartrean existentialism was attributed by many (Raskin, 2001) to his refusal to reduce human life to its historical dimension, and a criticism against narrowing down human action to a particular ideological path of predetermined options. Therefore, even though Camus has not provided a theory or definition of human potential, his work is practically a prescription of potential against human suffering, and it will be read as such in the second chapter.

Finally, the thesis will start approaching Fanon's work with a focus on the absence of potential. Fanon describes the colonial sphere as a "zone of non-being" in his book *White Skin Black Masks,* where it becomes clear that colonial subjects have been denied their subjectivity, and therefore, all agency and potential. Fanon has arguably rejected the idea of an agency which is inherent in subjects (De Oto, 2021). Human agency is shaped according to historical processes and the experiences of a subject. This makes it possible to conceive a non-recognised subject in the form of the colonised individual who finds oneself trapped in the "zone of non-being" with all potential negated. It will be shown that, like Camus, Fanon also sees potential as a solution to violence, and discusses the process in which one re-imagines both the Self and the post-colony and engages in creative action to build this new world, its values, and its subjects. To create subjectivity is to open the sphere of potential, and this is the way in which the thesis will show the relevance of potential to Fanon's thought.

Finally, the last chapter discusses biopolitics and, in this context Agamben's work and his views on potentiality. Following the thread of the main argument that violence functions as negation of human potential, chapter four offers a broader discussion around the negation of potential in biopolitics. In neoliberal and biopolitical societies, human beings are subjugated to the logic of the market in the form of human capital, which has been discussed in the literature as the "neoliberalization of potentiality" (Christiaens, 2021). Human potential is restricted to processes of competition, responsibilisation and a strict dichotomy of success and failure that summarises the key characteristics of biopolitical violence. Against the logic the defines human potential as a set of desirable and predetermined characteristics, according

to market demands, the chapter will maintain an open view of potential that loosely reveals the ways in which subjects define what they want or do not want to be.

Overall, this explains why a precise definition of human potential will not be offered, nor there will be an attempt to come up with specific categories of potential. Instead, the thesis will proceed by following and uncovering each thinker's interest in human potential, revealing the impact of violence on subjects. Galtung's work is the most well-known scholarly effort to fit manifestations of violence into a typology and some of these manifestations, such as structural and cultural violence are still central in academic debates. The literature, however, has downplayed the element of human potential and overemphasises structural constraints instead. The problem that emerges is a gap between Galtung's idea of violence, which is tied to peace theory anyway, and key understandings of violence and subjectivity in modern political theory. For example, Galtung simplistically portrays structural violence as violence missing a subject, while today a great number of Foucault-inspired scholars understand power and violence as relational concepts.

Galtung's typology is an excellent starting point to theorise the political function of violence and its effects but remains limited and unable to differentiate between power and domination. How can Galtung's approach be taken further to become useful to a political theory of violence? According to one suggestion in the literature, instead of focusing on the dichotomy between agents and structures, we can embrace the idea of a "lingering" violence and consider different temporalities, spaces, and dynamics of violence (Winters, 2012). Violence is structural not because we cannot observe it as a direct action but because we, as subjects, reproduce it and allow it to manifest in our power relations. There is a very thin line between structure and agency, hence the dynamic interaction between them. At the same time, potential

should not be understood in its limited sense as human "well-being" in peaceful conditions, such as the potential to service a curable disease, which is what Galtung focuses on. This thesis wishes instead to interpret potential in terms of political subjectivity and in the context of political relations of power. In this way, the danger of depoliticizing the idea of human potential by presenting it as the responsibility of powerful structures, such as the state, will hopefully be avoided.

The thesis will show that major political theory works on violence are implicitly–and sometimes explicitly– concerned with potential as the element that violence primarily targets. I argue that violence functions as a negation of human potential and this will be shown through a detailed discussion of the works of Hannah Arendt, Albert Camus and Frantz Fanon. I hope to reveal how these three thinkers, despite their arguably irreconcilable differences and goals, all essentially argue that violence destroys human potential and that this potential is the most essential characteristic of political action. Furthermore, discussion of these thinkers will show that countering such violence does not need to lead us to a cycle of perpetual negation but, to the contrary, creative action that operates in the logic of human potential can break the cycle of violence. This means that instead of responding to violence there is also potential to act anew in a way that has not been shaped by violent negation. For this reason, the thesis sides with the position that violence is not an ineliminable aspect of politics and that understanding its function beyond definitional limitations and ethical argumentation is vital for the elimination of violence.

The analysis of violence through the work of the three thinkers is complemented with a discussion of biopolitics in the thought of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben. By accepting the historical contingence of violence, the discussion of biopolitics helps me bridge a

conceptualisation of violence in Arendt's, Camus's and Fanon's context with experiences of violence in modern biopolitics. Hopefully, it will be shown that even though manifestations of violence change over time and across space–which is a key weakness of all essentialist definitions– a conceptualisation of violence through its function as negation of potential can remain helpful and relevant as a framework of analysis. Before explaining how the thesis approaches each thinker and the role of each chapter in supporting the thesis, I wish to discuss briefly one of the most prominent debates on political violence in academic literature and explain the stance of this thesis towards it. This will hopefully clarify even further the purpose and contribution of the thesis.

The Legitimacy Debate and its dominance in theorizing violence.

As explained above, key debates on violence tend to emphasize the problems associated with it. The main efforts in the literature to understand and define violence are placed within the debate of the legitimacy of violence, even if this is done implicitly by primarily focusing on acts labelled as "illegitimate violence". Legitimacy poses as an intellectual straightjacket and it fragments our understanding of violence. In this way violence becomes the mere equivalent of illegitimate use of force. Ethical perspectives and human rights concerns have their own merit but cannot contribute to a thorough understanding of violent phenomena, exactly because they remain restricted to a discussion of what is morally or legally permissible. Following from the earlier mention to the disruptive character of violence, which unsettles the processes it affects, an ethical order might not simply contrast with violence but may be altogether suspended and meaningless in the presence of violence; violence changes everything in more ways that we are usually willing to grasp. It is futile to argue over the legitimacy of violence, when these arguments are guided not by our understanding of violence but by power and the way it defines violence. Schinkel (2010, p.28) argues that the difference between "potestas"

and “violencia” is based on the principle that it is power that defines violence, turning this into a differentiation between the legitimate violence of the state and illegitimate violence. State sovereignty is the elephant in the room in all discussions of violence and I wish to briefly explain here two ways in which this has jeopardised our capacity to theorize and understand the way violence functions.

The first point is that discussions over the illegitimacy of violence are inextricably linked to the idea of the irrationality of violence. Cavanaugh (2009) locates the idea of irrational violence in the heart of the secular liberal state. The secular state, by identifying itself with modernity and the Enlightenment, framed the religious–in terms of non-secular– Other as irrational and violent. At first look, this serves concealing the forms of violence that characterise modern liberal states, hence fragmenting by definition our understanding of how violence works. More importantly though, labelling the non-secular Other as irrational and violent did not simply delegitimise non-secular violence but a whole pattern of thinking associated with it (ibid, p.205). In other words, separating rational– seen as necessary and limited–violence from its irrational counterpart, excludes a whole range of alternative discourses from what counts as meaningful politics. Of course, this in itself can be seen as a form of epistemic violence.

Furthermore, the idea of the violent and irrational Other has promoted the assumption that violence sits in particular places, which Springer (2011) attributes to the exploitation of imaginative geographies by the “theology of neoliberalism”. According to this logic, the fact that certain parts of the world suffer the worst and most persistent types of violence can be explained by the inherent characteristics of this particular location and its inhabitants, usually associated with a lack of rational choices. Our understanding of violence is therefore also restricted in terms of space, prohibiting us from theorizing the various interdependencies of

violent phenomena. In addition to this, the myth of senseless violence also falsely establishes the assumption of a dialectical opposition between violence and counter-violence (Staudigl, 2014). This leads us to conceptual fragmentation even further, by categorising a set of violent phenomena under a wholly separate label, such as the term "security", in an attempt to associate certain violent practices with peace and non-violence.

The second issue has to do with how the field of international relations is to a great extent complicit in undertheorizing violence while at the same time theorizing the state has helped frame violence as ontologically necessary to politics. As far as the first part is concerned, even though violence is a central theme of international relations (in the sense of war) there is not really much discussion of the term. To be more precise, as Thomas (2011) explains, IR does talk about violence all the time, but does so implicitly, often avoiding the actual term and instead using terms such as conflict, hostility, offensive strategy or use of force. Thomas (ibid, p. 1816) also notices that this use of language serves to conceal or disregard the fact that individuals are being hurt by the use of violence and presents it as just one aspect of statesmanship, hence normalising it. This is not surprising given that, as explained above, the violence of the state is seen as legitimate and hence studied as a phenomenon separate to violence. It is because of the preoccupation of IR mostly with states and their "use of force" and "populations", in the context of the state's legitimate monopoly, that IR theory is prevented from examining the concept of violence more critically. Even those approaches attempting to be critical and sympathetic towards resistance restrict themselves to the ethics of violence and just wars and focus primarily on intentions behind acts of violence and not on how violence actually operates (Finlay, 2017). Overall, in IR the emphasis remains not on the consequences of violence to politics but on its strategic use or the circumstances of employing it.

Regarding the second part, traditional IR and its theorization of state and war has contributed to normalising violence as a phenomenon that belongs ontologically to the sphere of politics. This is not much different to the assumption that life without violence is unrealistic wishful thinking, a belief that mostly points towards discussions of human nature. Be that as it may, Malesevic (2017, p.25) righty emphasizes the fact that "rather than violence being an intrinsic quality of human essence, it is much more plausible to see violent action as a product of organizational dynamics". Not all political interaction is inherently violent, but the Weberian roots of state theory sketches violence–and the threat of it– as a key aspect of the definition of the state and, therefore, a key aspect of politics. The interesting paradox that arises here is that even though it is the state that has been associated with organized violence already from its origins, the assumption of the modern era is that advanced state organization, and the civilizational process that accompanies it, eventually reduce violence. Violence then appears to be an ontological element of politics that political organisations try to curb. This is close to what Malesevic (2010, p.119) calls the "ontological dissonance" between modernity and violence. In modern politics violence is meant to be delegitimised but we need organisations with the capacity to use violence to do this. The gravest consequence is not simply that we disregard the potential to bring change to what seems to be the making of human action, but the dangerous assumption that violence is ontologically tied to political action.

The obvious conclusion drawn from this assumption is that violence is an essential aspect of politics and it cannot be eliminated. Even worse, this strengthens the impression that political action is necessarily conflictual, at least until the moment consensus can be achieved. On the one hand, this encourages the neoliberal idea that the only alternative to violence is to enforce consensus even if this means to mask existing political grievances and enforce domination of one particular–and allegedly peaceful–order. On the other hand, the impasse of violent

confrontation restricts the option of resistance to violent means, endangering the perpetuation of violence. This thesis follows Johanna Oksala's claim that a politicized conception of reality can help us embrace agonistic politics without retreating to excuses for violence, by admitting that reality is produced through political struggle, but such political struggle turns violent in circumstances of domination (Oksala, 2012). Instead of understanding political struggle in Manichean terms, it is possible to think of political contestation as multifaceted competition with overlapping manifestations of power. Oksala (ibid, p.6) relies on the work of Foucault to reveal how "his account of productive power grounds an agonistic conception of politics that does not build upon an ontology of violence". Given that for Foucault power is everywhere and resistance also involves power–is in a sense a "lesser" power– any social order is created through patterns of hegemonic practices and the dissent these evoke in the form of resistance practices. This implies nothing more than the agonistic character of politics, which is only endangered when practices of domination become rigid and close down the opportunities for resistance.

Foucault drew a distinction between power and violence, but also saw domination as more than often compatible with violent practices. However, manifestations of domination do not necessarily involve violence in the visible sense of the use of force. For this reason, the argument of this thesis is not concerned with any particular type of violence and is not particularly preoccupied with physical violence in its direct sense. This means that agonistic responses to violence and the effort to create and promote alternative discursive practices should not be restricted to and identified as violence and counter-violence. Moreover, I obviously do not wish to turn this thesis into an aspiring solution that will end all violence. What I simply want to suggest is that an understanding of how violence functions can be helpful in showing how the response to violence should *not* function in order for resistance to be

productive and escape the violent cycle. Placing my analysis outside the key scholarly debate of violence which is concerned with the legitimacy/illegitimacy dichotomy helps the thesis remain focused on the function of violence, which is my main objective here.

Arendt, Camus, Fanon, Foucault: The dissonance quartet?

The argument on the political function of violence will be explored through the work of thinkers who have not often been analysed together on the basis of their ideological affinity. Hannah Arendt and Franz Fanon are commonly cited together in the context of legitimacy debates on violence, presented as the two extremely opposite positions (Frazer and Hutchings, 2008) (Finlay, 2009). Arendt has devoted a big part of her work in discussing the catastrophic effects of violence on power and suggesting that its anti-political character can never justify it as a valid option for political action. Fanon, to the contrary, is often read as not only justifying violence but even glorifying it as the only way to restore the power of the extremely disadvantaged. Albert Camus has written extensively on philosophical and political issues, including violence and totalitarianism like Arendt, but his work is usually considered more literary than central to political theory. The key political debate Camus has been associated with is that of French colonialism. Camus's position on anticolonial violence not only destroyed his friendship with Sartre but positions him as the key intellectual opponent of Fanon on this matter.

Nevertheless, interpretations of such complex thinkers cannot be manipulated to successfully fit Manichean debates on political phenomena. The simplistic argument of good violence vs. bad violence harms our capacity to understand violence and debate it in a meaningful way. This is not to say that the thinkers discussed are inconsistent across their various works and I do not wish to argue that their positions on violence agree harmoniously. I aspire to contribute

to the literature on violence with a reading that reveals a common interest these thinkers share in the potential of human action and in how violence affects it. Arendt, Camus and Fanon have been selected exactly because they seem to adopt very different views on violence, yet these views can be understood as driven by the same focus on potential.

Arendt has offered some of the most sophisticated and controversial works of political theory, especially as the theorist who claimed that violence does not belong to the political sphere. Arendt's main justification of this is the destructive effect of violence on power and politics; this alone justifies the importance of including her work in a thesis that focuses on the political function and effects of violence. What is more, Arendt's seminal work on totalitarianism remains one of the most relevant readings on political violence today. The interest in totalitarianism is one of the several common things Camus shares with Arendt, including their admiration of pluralism, solidarity and participatory democracy. While both thinkers explicitly argue against violence, Arendtian political analysis better represents the level of *hoi polloi*, in the plural sense of political action, while Camus complements this with a view from the perspective of individual experience and draws a link to political communities.

Fanon obviously represents the boldest choice of the thesis, since his work has been discussed as directly opposing both Arendt and Camus. Analysing Fanon's thought on violence is crucial for the thesis' argument for two reasons. First, because Fanon is read in a manner that reveals the limitations of understanding violence from the perspective of legitimacy. Fanon's work is often dismissed as an overly emotional glorification of violence and it has been popular mostly because of its affinity to Marxism. In reading Fanon, I side with those in the literature who approach him as an independent political thinker and less with those mostly interested in his

revolutionary credentials. By focusing on Fanon's interest in Hegel but also the existentialist aspect of Marxism, it becomes easier to uncover his meeting point with Arendt and Camus.

Finally, the thesis also includes Foucauldian approaches to violence. It is impossible for the scope of the thesis to expand on a Foucauldian political theory of violence. The extent to which Foucault has been interested in violence is obscured by his focus on power and his complex understanding of the relation between the two concepts, which needs to be studied separately. However, bringing Foucault into the analysis is important because of his work on biopolitics and governmentality. A discussion of biopolitical violence allows the argument of the thesis to become relevant to modern politics, while my reading of biopolitical violence helps consolidate the position that violence functions politically as negation of human potential. Agamben also plays a role in supporting the argument of the thesis, as one of the thinkers whose work on violence and biopolitics is influenced by both Arendt and Fanon. As a thinker associated with both biopolitics and the concept of potential (as potentiality), Agamben is discussed together with Foucault in the context of the *Homo Sacer* and the zone of indistinction. While remaining aware of the disagreement between the two thinkers, my aim is to emphasize their common interest in the biopolitical subject, which also creates a parallel to the analysis of Fanon and zones of violent exclusion in political life.

Chapter one examines in some detail key works of Hannah Arendt. The chapter begins with her work on the human condition (Arendt, 1998), in order to sketch out her political ontology and her understanding of violence in the context of dehumanisation. As a thinker whose primary concern is the plurality of political action and the creation of shared meaning, Arendt is read in this chapter as understanding power to be intrinsic to human relations, not unlike Foucault. Power is generated by people acting together and this action is necessarily

unpredictable and fluid. The key aspect to the thesis' argument is Arendt's concept of natality and her discussion on the importance of new beginnings for political action. Natality is crucial in interpreting Arendt's controversial claim that violence does not belong to the political sphere. The chapter explains that natality, both literal and symbolic, means that the political sphere is constantly populated by new agents who initiate their own unique, unpredictable and irreversible actions. Even though Arendt praises the agonism involved in negotiating meaning and competing for power in the public sphere, she considers an attack on novelty and unpredictability the same as an attack on politics by bringing spontaneous action to a halt. This summarises the role of violence in Arendt's work and it becomes clear that the most extreme manifestation of violence for her is totalitarianism.

Arendt's conceptualisation of violence has been deeply shaped by the experience of totalitarianism and this becomes clearer in the chapter by discussing the effects of totalitarian violence on the political sphere. The political sphere shrinks and becomes empty when violence immobilises action. This explains the rejection of violence in Arendt's work but not the paradoxical claim that violence is antithetical to politics. To shed light on the function of violence in Arendt's work, the chapter discusses her work on Revolution (Arendt, 1990). Revolutionary violence is for Arendt a stage of breaking with past conditions and the opening of a space which can become genuinely political. Arendt differentiates between liberation and freedom in a similar way to differentiating between violence and power. Whether there will be a passage from liberation to freedom depends on whether violence will be terminated to allow the political sphere to emerge and power and action to start flourishing. By showing how Arendt links necessity to violence and power to action, I claim that violence plays for Arendt a pre-political role, making violence not a necessary ontological aspect of the political sphere. In short, the first chapter shows that for Arendt violence functions as a negation of natality, the

human potential for action; violence is destructive for the political sphere but not a necessary evil of it. Politics thrives when there is freedom of action among peers and creative new beginnings are not obstructed by domination.

Chapter two focuses on Camus's philosophical work in The Myth of Sisyphus (Camus, 2005) and The Rebel (Camus, 2013b). The first part discusses Camus's philosophy of the absurd and its link to existential violence. Camus is interested in the construction of subjectivity and how this is affected by unpredictability. The lack of universal meaning can push individuals to nihilistic violence and for this reason Camus suggests a state of permanent resistance towards the absurd. The solution is neither to assume control over the absurd by imposing a predictable order, nor to abandon humanity to nihilistic violence. Instead, the potential of new experiences and an agonistic attitude is what Camusean resistance entails.

The second part introduces the key concept of solidarity that links individual resistance to rebellion and shared action. The common experience of absurdity should generate solidarity among individuals; therefore, the answer to violence is for Camus the creation of the lacking meaning together with others, linking this chapter to the previous one conceptually. The key argument is that for Camus rebellion towards the absurd has a positive and creative character which essentially represents human potential. This potential is endangered by lack of solidarity and nihilism, which is expressed by violent means and political repression, something that the chapter discusses through Camus's thoughts on totalitarianism.

The third part closes the chapter with an application of Camus's philosophical thought to his position in the historical context of French colonialism in Algeria. The controversial and perhaps contradictory position Camus held as a French Algerian had been shaped by his

insistence on solidarity and the rejection of violence. This part introduces a discussion of colonial violence and resistance, which the next chapter on Fanon develops more thoroughly, allowing a parallel understanding of the positions of the two thinkers. Camus's stance towards post-colonial Algeria rests on the idea that rebellion requires action in solidarity to create something new, in a fashion very similar to Arendt's idea of revolution. Camus was vocal against colonial violence and domination but advocated the potential of French settlers and Algerians to coexist and negotiate the creation of the new Algeria. Camus was aware of the capacity of violence to hijack the revolutionary spirit and destroy the potential for shared action, which explains his objection to anti-colonial violence. Overall, the chapter will explain how for Camus violence is identified as nihilism towards the potential to live a life based on new experiences and creativity, in other words a negation of the human potential for creative action.

Chapter three discusses violence in the work of Frantz Fanon. Fanon made explicit that decolonization is a violent phenomenon in his book "The Wretched of the Earth" (Fanon, 1963). This book has been established as a radical manifesto that glorifies and calls for violent resistance. The chapter follows a different route and starts with the claim that decolonization is violent because colonialism is violent; decolonization is a stage of liberation from conditions of extreme violence. Power relations in colonialism turn into relationships of domination, and this is the extreme form of colonial violence Fanon talks about. Fanon discusses the function and effects of this extreme form of violence in his work "Black Skin, White Masks" (Fanon, 2007). The colonial space is described as a "zone of non-being" meaning that subjectivity is severely disrupted, and all human potential is negated not only for the natives but also for the settlers. The chapter brings out the parallel between colonial violence and totalitarian violence

in Arendt and shows how for both thinkers the result is the destruction of the political sphere and its substitution by an empty, fixated space.

Perhaps the most central aspect of the analysis, which brings Fanon closer to the other thinkers and the main argument of the thesis, is the importance of new beginnings in his work. If the zone of non-being is a dystopia deprived of "genuine new departures", Fanon's answer to colonial violence is a radical awakening of subjectivity, a claim to space and power, and the construction of a new political community in conditions of solidarity. Fanon clearly does not support reactionary violence; he actually goes as far as considering it one of the worse effects of colonial violence. Decolonization in Fanon should not be seen as a violent rampage but an effort to disrupt domination and unfreeze power relations, something that Fanon discusses in the context of Hegelian recognition. The chapter aims to bring out the primacy of creative action and new beginnings in Fanonian thought and argues that for Fanon violence is a negation of the most crucial aspects of subjectivity, in other words a negation of human potential. The vicious circle of colonial violence can only be interrupted if liberation is accompanied by negotiating anew the construction of a community of human dignity and solidarity.

Chapter four discusses violence in the context of biopolitics through the works of Foucault and Agamben. The first section explains how Foucault (2008) understood biopolitics and engages with the conceptualisation of power in his work. The discussion brings Foucault together with Arendt in order to explore key aspects of their thought on power and politics and argue how both thinkers agree on a view of violence that functions as negation of potential. For Foucault, a key characteristic of biopolitics is that strict discipline is not as important as regulation. The argument is that such regulation, and in many instances self-regulation, of biopolitics serves as the way to treat the uncertain.

Even though biopolitics tries to ameliorate human life and not harm it by over-relying on violence, the idea of biopolitical violence is not as paradoxical as it sounds, and it rests on the fact that efforts to control uncertainty and the unpredictability of action serve as a negation of human potential. This is what the second section shows by discussing manifestations of violence in neoliberal biopolitics. Biopolitical violence not only exists but negates subjects their potential, severely constraining action, despite the fact that encouraging potential is central in neoliberal biopolitical narratives.

The third section of the chapter discusses Agamben's concept of the *Homo Sacer*, as the key figure of biopolitical violence (Agamben, 1998). This is done through a thorough discussion of the state of exception and the zone of indistinction, explaining the idea of bare life and the power of the sovereign to politicize and de-politicize human life. Agamben sees sovereignty and depoliticized bare life as the root of violence and despite his differences with Foucault, both thinkers are interested in the violence shaping of subjectivities through inclusion and exclusion.

Negating Potential: From totalitarianism and colonialism to neoliberal biopolitics.

It has been explained so far that violence is a complex phenomenon that manifests in various ways. It is one of the most important phenomena in social sciences and it has been examined thoroughly in the literature; however, violence as a concept remains elusive and still gives rise to debates over its causes and legitimacy. The thesis' ambition is to contribute to the question of how violence functions, and its overall argument is that the key political function of violence is to negate human potential. Potential is not easily defined and measurable, but it can serve as an umbrella term that refers to human subjectivity and how this is expressed

through political action and practices. This approach to the concept of violence emerges from a close reading of the key thinkers analysed in the thesis.

The previous section explained the role of each thinker in the thesis, and their relevance to the main argument. It is important to also clarify why these thinkers have been analysed together in this thesis and how their works combined bring out the main argument. A first reason for bringing these thinkers together is that their work concerns a similar historical context. Arendt, Camus and Fanon, engaged with the concept violence when totalitarianism and colonialism were shaking world politics. Violence is a contingent phenomenon, discussed as a concern stemming from one's historical viewpoints, so one should not fail to recognise the experiences and motivations of thinkers who reflect on it.

As it has been explained, Hannah Arendt wrote about violence mainly because she was troubled by the origins and impact of totalitarianism in world politics. The Holocaust and other crimes of totalitarian regimes problematised violence and human suffering and left its mark on political thought, as well as subsequent ideologies and policies. It will be shown that for Arendt totalitarianism as a historical paradigm is an extreme form of violence and hence is presented as an extreme form of negation. Negation in totalitarianism is directed against the political sphere itself because it destroys the potential of human beings to act and reveal themselves. Potential for political action is for Arendt the key characteristic of the human condition, that comes together with the fact of human natality. Denying human potential for action is the same as denying one's human condition and subjectivity. The novel action of humans who come to the world is the only way in which politics can thrive and violence of any form directly threatens this human potential. The thesis shows how for Arendt the unpredictability and irreversibility of action are the key justification behind negating human

potential, in a futile effort to control individuals and the political sphere. Political regimes of control and domination are therefore naturally violent exactly because they seek to eliminate spontaneous human action.

Camus is another thinker who wrote his philosophical but also literary work as a response to totalitarianism and its nihilistic violence. Camus' philosophical work is explicitly concerned with violence towards the Self and towards others. Camus located the origins of violence within the absurdity of the human condition: the lack of a known higher meaning. Such existential violence brings nihilism and disregard for the value of human life and efforts to fight the unknown, the unpredictable fact of human existence. The thesis draws a parallel between Camus and Arendt regarding fighting unpredictability and human potential, hence negating the very character of human life. This is a novel reading of the two thinkers that can reveal their common approach to the motives and function of violence. Both thinkers put forward the creation of shared meaning as an alternative to violence and reject the ontologically necessary character of violence, as the analysis will show. While Arendt provides the ontological basis of the political sphere and the effect of violence on it, Camus adds another layer of analysis, the existential one, that considers individual experience.

Furthermore, Camus was also concerned with colonialism, decolonisation and violence associated with these historical realities. This means that his voice was part of a historical debate that included not only Arendt, but also Fanon. All these thinkers were –explicitly or implicitly– voices of the same debates on violence, domination and resistance, together with other thinkers, most notably another French intellectual, Jean-Paul Sartre (Sasnal, 2020). Existentialist, Phenomenological, and Marxist/Hegelian influences also make the conversation between these thinkers possible. The fact that Arendt, Camus, and Fanon, had

similar problematisations of violence in the same period, offers some reassurance that the argument of the thesis is not trying to arbitrarily bring together the work of thinkers who have no intellectual proximity. Contrary to this, it is this original reading of the thinkers' works on violence that gave rise to the main argument here.

Moreover, Fanon's addition to the analysis is crucial for the main argument, not only because he was concerned about similar issues in the same period of time with Camus and Arendt, but also because his work here is read as a praise of new beginnings and creative action. Even though Fanon is seen as a thinker who praises violence, in direct confrontation with Arendt and Camus, the thesis approaches him as a thinker who prioritises the creation of new political subjectivities, solidarity and a new society based on shared meaning; his work as a whole imagines the new world after colonialism, as well as a new humanism (Sharifi and Chabot, 2019). The thesis acknowledges the differences between its key thinkers but, as it wishes to avoid a fragmented approach to the concept of violence, it seeks to move past the differences of the thinkers in order to establish the core aspects of violence that they agree on.

Fanon is analysed as a third thinker who, like Arendt and Camus, emphasises human potential and spontaneous action, but he also adds more to the analysis by explaining in detail how negation occurs. Fanon's detailed account of the impact of colonial violence on subjects, the psychological destruction of subjectivities and the negation of their potential is detailed and helpful towards the main argument. Fanon's "zone of non-being" is read as a parallel to totalitarian zones, as a space void of potential and meaningful political relations. It will be revealed how Fanon sides with Arendt and Camus against the dangers of determining a fixed end of human action, a historical telos, sacrificing the potential of subjects to a dialectical process that is expected to offer something higher than the subjects, who are reduced to

consumable means. In parallel with the extreme violence of totalitarianism, Fanon examines how the extreme violence of colonialism denies recognition and destroys subjectivity. Therefore, the negating character of violence analysed in the first two chapters is not restricted to the phenomenon of totalitarianism, as a form of ideological nihilism, but emerges as a function of violence itself. As with Arendt and Camus, also for Fanon the answer to these conditions of domination is freedom that can be achieved by creative action and solidarity.

Finally, these three thinkers fit well together in the current analytical framework because they do not see violence as ontologically necessary to politics. Since the thesis holds this position and also wishes to eschew discussions around the legitimacy of violence, it is important that none of these thinkers suggests that violence cannot be eliminated from the political nor is their work focused on providing criteria of legitimacy. From the perspective of this thesis, these thinkers reflect on violence with the aim to expose the violent and negating effects of totalitarianism and colonialism. This does not mean that Arendt, Camus and Fanon's works are reduced to wishful thinking or that they reject the possibility of resistance and aggression to support a pacifist approach. It will be shown that exactly because spontaneous political action is at the centre of their attention, together with all the unpredictable effects it entails, Arendt, Camus and Fanon acknowledge the possibility of using force and try to make sense of its limitations. It will be shown that all three thinkers emphasise agonistic politics, characterised by solidarity and creative action, and through this stance they remain open to the idea of politics without violence, as long as the negation of potential is rejected.

Overall, the thesis will show that all three thinkers reveal in different ways that violence may take different faces, but its key function is the negation of human potential. For this reason,

new beginnings and creative human action is the only viable solution against the negation of violence, which seeks to control unpredictability and fixate meaning. All thinkers point at solidarity and the creation of shared meaning in order to achieve freedom among others. Nevertheless, the fact that Arendt, Camus and Fanon write in the same historical context might imply that the function of violence as a negation of human potential is also contingent to that particular period and its unique phenomena of totalitarianism and colonialism. One might argue that with the end of totalitarian and colonial regimes, the function of violence has also changed. It is for this reason that the last chapter discusses biopolitics: given that the three main thinkers discuss violence in a particular historical context, it is important for the argument to confirm that a conceptualisation of a violence as negation of potential is still meaningful in a rapidly shifting biopolitical and neoliberal context.

The contemporary validity of the argument does not necessarily require proof that totalitarianism, colonialism and biopolitics overlap or that there is ideological continuity from the one paradigm to the other. Esposito (2008) is one of the scholars who has convincingly explained the differences between the two phenomena of totalitarianism and biopolitics. However, the fact that these phenomena have been examined together, has indicated the totalising character of biopolitics (Collier, 2011) but also ways in which biopolitical logic became normalised in totalitarianism (Diprose and Ziarek, 2018). It is perhaps the negating character of violence that enhances the continuities of these phenomena. The last chapter sheds light to violence in biopolitical, neoliberal politics in order to reveal that violence still functions as negation of potential in current politics, and therefore such analytical and conceptual approach is useful and relevant today. Examining Foucault's idea of productive power and his understanding of biopolitics are important in order to reveal contemporary strategies of power and manifestations of violence. It is necessary to show that not only

neoliberal politics has not freed itself from the burden of violence, but it is possibly guilty of an even harsher negation of human potential.

Moreover, the dialogue between Foucault and Arendt, strengthens the analysis behind the main argument. It has been shown in the literature that Foucault and Arendt are two thinkers who share a lot of common ground in theorising power, subjectivity and agency, despite the obvious differences (Gordon, 2002), (Allen, 2010). The last chapter contributes to bridging the gap between the two thinkers when it comes to the question of violence, although it remains consciously limited to the topic of power in biopolitics. For this reason, the chapter also considers the work of Giorgio Agamben on biopolitics, especially since Agamben has relied on the works of both Arendt and Foucault. Agamben's figure of the *Homo Sacer* is discussed as the thinker's interpretation of biopolitical violence, and it helps bridge the distance between totalitarianism and biopolitics by revealing their historical continuities and the violence towards bare life that has been stripped of subjectivity. The chapter will show how the biopolitical, neoliberal subject is seen as a potential threat of unpredictability in a highly regulated and marketized society, in which one must sacrifice spontaneity and creativity for what is framed as rational behaviour. Subjects experience the negating effects of violence both through the straitjacket of rational choice and when they fail to validate the success of biopolitical and market rationalities.

In this way, what initially looks like a set of distinct conceptualisations of violence that stem from different intellectual interests , will eventually reveal that all these thinkers point to a function of violence that targets the very subjectivity of human beings and negates their potential in the effort to control the unpredictability of human action. From the historical

paradigms of totalitarian and colonial regimes, to contemporary neoliberal biopolitics, it is useful to understand violence as negation of human potential.

Chapter 1: From natality to plurality: The power of acting anew and acting together

The following analysis of Hannah Arendt's political thought aims at presenting her theory of the nature of the political sphere and interprets her views on the role of violence. Given the main argument of this thesis, Arendt's emphasis on the importance of natality and beginnings becomes central. This will reveal the reasons behind her controversial claim that all violence is anti-political and destructive of political power, which is contrary to the view that examines violence as ontologically linked to the political. Arendt's thought had occasionally been misinterpreted as an elitist and conservative mindset that renders the prospect of revolution hopeless, mainly because of her critique of "the social" (Gordon, 2017, p.120). In this section, the contrary claim is put forward to reveal Arendt's radical propositions emerging out of what appears as contradictions in her thought (Canovan, 1978). Without obscuring any of Arendt's fierce criticisms directed towards traditionally left-wing ideas and elements of revolutionary thought, it is necessary to shed light on a side of Arendt, whose faith in even the smallest acts of resistance was guided by her conviction that history, rather than consequences, is the end of political action (Arendt, 2006).

I choose here to begin backwards, opening the chapter with *The Human Condition* and closing it with *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, because Arendt's political ontology and specifically her concept of natality are directly linked to the main argument of this thesis: violence functions as a negation of human potential. Arendt's ontological framework will serve as a solid conceptual basis for the thesis, on which I will later build the analysis of other thinkers, explaining conceptual similarities and differences where appropriate. Once I summarise Arendt's understanding of the political sphere, her views on violence and the most extreme form of it, totalitarianism, will be explained within this ontological context. It will first be

shown that the key element of political life for Arendt is human action because this is how shared meaning is constructed. In this context, I will proceed to discuss the destructive effect of violence on the human condition and explain the link Arendt makes between necessity and violence through her approach to labour, work and action. I will then bring in the key concept of natality which I interpret as Arendt's view of human potential. This emphasis on potential will reveal the significance of beginnings for the political sphere and explain how rupture and change can be understood in terms of creativity instead of violence. Following from this, I discuss revolution in Arendt's work to explain the difference between freedom and liberation and show that Arendt distinguished between pre-political violence and the creative force that establishes the political sphere in conditions of freedom. The fragile limit between these two phenomena rests on the fact that action is characterised by unpredictability and irreversibility, which can create instability and insecurity within the political sphere. This can invite efforts to control and restrict action, which is detrimental to politics and gives rise to violence and loss of political power and freedom. At this point, the idea of violence that negates human potential will become clearer. The last section brings this argument into the case of totalitarianism as an extreme form of violence that tries to curb unpredictability to the extent that it destroys the political sphere and therefore all power.

The Human Condition and the ontology of politics

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt (1998) sets out her ontology of politics. The book is an effort to restore the status of the political after the horror of totalitarianism, and hence a follow-up and response to her previous work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Arendt, 1973). It needs to be noted here that Arendt is not attempting to explain human nature in an essentialist manner. For Arendt human nature is unknowable to us; the "human condition" does not refer literally to a single condition, but to a constellation of conditions (Macready, 2016). In Arendt's own

words, what she proposes is simply ‘nothing more than to think what we are doing’ (Arendt, 1998, p.5). This hints that Arendt’s focus is primarily on human agency, which is shaped by the world surrounding us but is also capable of shaping and transforming this world, and therefore, human condition itself. Arendt clearly states that ‘the human condition is not the same as human nature… the only statement we can make regarding their [humans’] “nature” is that they still are conditioned beings, even though their condition is now self-made to a considerable extent’ (Arendt, 1998, p.10). By “self-made’’, Arendt here means exactly those human-made conditions which are added onto the “objective” natural environment and interact with it.

Following from this, the main theme of Arendt’s ontology of politics is human activity and specifically action. Human activity, or *vita activa*, is studied by Arendt through the categories of action, work and labour, and it is action which constitutes political life. This is based on Aristotle’s distinction between *bios* and *zoe,* where the latter coincides with biological life and has to be distinguished from *bios politikos,* which refers to political life. Testament to Arendt’s commitment to conceive the political not as a fixed abstract but in terms of a fluid plurality is her statement that political power is necessarily generated among subjects. The political cannot exist by and for the individual alone, since ‘men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world’ (Arendt, 1998, p.7). In other words, action goes on directly among individuals without the intervention of material things, therefore, it represents plurality itself. Plurality is a condition for human action because, despite all beings being similar in terms of their humanity, at the same time no individual is exactly identical to another. Accordingly, for Arendt action is fragile, and this fragility is best understood if action is also interpreted as speech. Everything spoken is necessarily new and unique and is lost as soon as it is communicated without the possibility to be reproduced in the exact same way and context (Penta, 1996). Action would

not matter in a world where men are reproduced as a repetition of their ancestors; humanity means exactly that men are born different and hence their actions are not a predictable repetition of the same patterns of behaviour.

Two elements are worth noting here. The most crucial, which will be examined more thoroughly below, is the potential that such difference brings into the world and is capable of generating new beginnings. It will become clear that this is the backbone of Arendt's political ontology through the concept of natality. Before this, some further discussion of the value of plurality is needed, since it is the concepts that defines Arendt's view of humanity.

As already explained, plurality is what makes the concept of humanity possible. Arendt (1958, p.588) explains how 'the human world is constantly invaded by strangers, newcomers whose actions must be unknown to those who are already there and are going to leave in a sort while'. Through these life circles, natality brings to the world new people, whose novelty necessarily makes them different to what the world has already seen. The shared human condition brings together different individuals and this difference creates a dynamic whole, humanity, which creates history and makes remembrance possible even after the death of one generation. For Arendt there is no contradiction between the whole and the parts; on the contrary there exists an inextricable link essential to the performance of political action. This brings to mind Arendt's depiction of totalitarianism as a metal band that squeezes people together into "one gigantic Man" (Arendt, 1973, p.466). As opposed to totalitarianism, which shapes individuals into an amorphous and homogenous mass, political plurality suggests a community in which individuals coexist in all their complexity and difference, without some external force or coercion bringing them together.

The plurality of action is the foundation of the political sphere which humans create themselves within the natural world. The creative force of humanity, human potential, lies in the power to construct meaning around the experience of reality. Meaning does not spring from some isolated powerful locus but can be thought of as a mosaic that corresponds to the plurality of perceptions. Arendt explains how a single individual cannot adequately grasp the objective world beyond one certain standpoint, but needs to perceive reality as:

> something that is shared by many people, lies between them, separates and links them, showing itself differently to each and comprehensible only to the extent that many people can talk *about* it and exchange their opinions and perspectives with one another, over against one another' (Arendt, 2009, p.128).

This gives the construction of meaning an agonistic character which seems to be igniting human creativity. Far from the need of violent fixation of meaning, Arendt is suggesting that a pluralistic political community should negotiate meaning within conditions of power relations. This meaning is subject to human-made history which is enabled to flow and change through the introduction of new individuals into humanity. Plurality allows and actually requires individual contributions, all of equal value by virtue of the necessarily shared character of meaning.

Action and speech set out the prerequisite of plurality, which brings into the political the elements of equality and distinction, necessary for the construction of meaning. This means that humans are equal as they can share common understandings but are also distinct, so they need to build these first through speech and action. On this point, Arendt warns against equating distinctness with otherness (Arendt, 1998, p.175). Otherness refers to differentiating oneself from other things, in terms of characteristics, while distinctness refers to alive beings and the capacity for unique existence. Such existence is not merely a bodily one, and it is not even tangible; it is linked to one's appearance in front of fellow humans through word and deed. We

can perceive this distinctiveness more clearly, if we are to think of it as the initiative to reveal oneself. Difference can be indeed perceived as something that sets humans apart from each other, especially from the standpoint of an 'Other' who finds oneself in front of the 'Other' in all suspiciousness and bewilderment. Arendt emphasises difference in terms of distinctiveness because her focus is on the subject itself, offering the initiative to reveal difference through the disclosure of subjectivity. This reveals the sophistication of Arendt's understanding of equality, and it should not be misinterpreted as advocacy of individualism. Even though Arendtian equality stems from the agency of the subject, it concerns humanity as a whole; both equality and distinction are necessary to the political sphere.

By allowing subjects to form a community through similarities and differences simultaneously, agonistic creativity can take the place of violent competition. Individuals can retain their subjectivity while sharing a commonly constructed world. Accordingly, the political is not a sphere with the sole purpose to settle disputes. If in our times people are meant to 'do politics' in order to resolve conflict of interests and reach consensus, Arendt goes further than giving politics simply the role of a reconciliatory instrument. For Arendt, the political is meant to generate power and bring humans to a closer and more meaningful understanding of the world they live in. In this manner, each individual has the potential to add their brick on the political edifice and make themselves literally members of the "body politic", with only the prerequisite to reveal themselves to others and convince them (or not) over the meaningfulness of their position. This potential is only violated when one is excluded from the public sphere or when the public sphere has been destroyed, as in the case of totalitarianism. In these cases, political power perishes, and the violence of exclusion shuts down the political sphere, negating human potential.

Human dignity, solidarity, and the dehumanisation of violence

In totalitarian regimes, dehumanisation destroys human action and consequently any sense of human dignity; this is what makes totalitarianism a form of extreme violence. For Arendt, human dignity can be retained only through the disclosure of the subject in conditions of plurality and cannot be granted to the subject externally. In other words, human dignity for Arendt is not an essence but an aspect of subjectivity. Macready (2016) suggests that Arendt does not examine the nature of human dignity but its place and function in political experience, avoiding both essentialist accounts and a "thick" concept which necessarily bears assumptions of theological nature. Instead, a thin conceptualisation of human dignity allows to strengthen its importance in political ontology by linking it directly to political action in the public sphere. For Arendt, human dignity cannot exist in isolation and is the outcome of agonistic action out of which the subject asserts its dignity and the fellow-humans ideally recognise it (ibid). This approach is strikingly similar to Franz Fanon's thought on spontaneity and the construction of subjectivity (Swift, 2008, p.76), which will be discussed in detail on the third chapter. Not only is the political a collective activity, but also stems from conscious choice and initiative. Contrary to a common view that politics is a necessity for coexisting individuals to resolve emerging conflict of interests and build consensus, Arendt sees political activity as the main element of the public sphere, which humans consciously establish and sustain through *praxis*, i.e. action (Arendt, 1998, p.13). Hence, politics here refers not to an automatic procedure with some specific utility, but to a distinct condition which signals both a space and a set of meaningful practices.

Even when human dignity faces great danger, and the political sphere is under attack, humanity can still be maintained among those who insist on valuing shared experience and struggle to preserve shared meanings. As a last resort, humanity can be expressed in terms of

"brotherhood" during "dark times" when those persecuted experience a radical "loss of the world" which brings them so close to each other so that every distance between them has disappeared (Arendt, 1993). Arendt, far from criticizing this similarly to the cramming of individuals in mass societies, claims that such humanity is the great privilege of pariah peoples which otherwise find themselves in the barbarism of wordlessness. This idea reappears in the thought of Camus and his theory of solidarity, as it will be discussed on the next chapter. An interesting element here is the existential character that both thinkers assign to these concepts. Specifically, in the case of Arendt, humanity as brotherhood is praised because it still manages to maintain the element of plurality. Opposite to massification, such sense of fraternity—which Arendt discusses originally in the context of friendship— is a form of resistance but more importantly experience: a refuge for shared human experience when experience of a lost world is not possible anymore.

Arendt inherited from Heidegger her intellectual predisposition to phenomenology, which is the basis of her approach to human existential experience. For this reason, her work is a valuable contribution to understanding the relation between the subject and humanity in plural terms. Hull's (2003) work on Hannah Arendt's "hidden philosophy" puts forward a set of important suggestions on this. While most thinkers attempt to manufacture a "mechanical reconciliation" in conditions of human coexistence, Arendt begins with plurality being already at the heart of human existence (ibid, p.41). This necessarily implies that humanity is not to be seen as an abstract notion but represents existence itself; this existence balances between plurality, i.e. difference, and human togetherness, i.e. commonality. Therefore, Hull (ibid, p.45) shows how one of Arendt's aims is to oppose methodological solipsism as a philosophical tool of scepticism towards the existence of others, and instead identify the very act of thinking not as a solitary activity but an interactive one. This becomes clear when Arendt laments modern

philosophy's exclusive concern with the self, which reduces 'all experiences, with the world as well with other human beings, to experience between man and himself' (Arendt, 1958, p.254).

A life without action and speech maintains its biological character but lies outside the human condition and makes one 'literally dead to the world' and deprived of human status, because one becomes excluded from humanity, and experience 'is no longer lived among men' (Arendt, 1958, p.176). In many societies, it is not uncommon to dehumanise those whose experiences cannot be shared or understood by the majority. For example, something as commonly human as sexuality, has often been manipulated and framed as an "alien experience'. Interesting work on racism and sexual exploitation has shown that perceptions of the uncivilised and hyper-sexualised Other aim at dehumanizing black people and have served as justification of the enslavement of an entire race (Holmes, 2016). Similarly, in the *Origins of Nazi Violence*, Enzo Traverso (2003) offers an all-encompassing approach to the links between dehumanisation and violence. In an interesting section, he draws on Foucault to discuss dehumanisation of death, in which 'killing takes place with no subject' moving from "death as a spectacle" to death brought by "technical means" (Traverso, 2003, p.17). This rings very similar to Camus' thoughts on dehumanisation, "victimless crimes" and nihilistic violence, which will be covered on the next chapter. Through time, dehumanisation is a necessary process for the justification of violence. Traverso (ibid. p.93), links fascist-era dehumanisation directly to the 'brutalisation of political life' through the introduction of warfare and 'methods of confrontation inherited from the trenches' into public life. This coincides with Arendt's work on totalitarian violence as the most extreme form of violence that creeps into the public sphere and destroys politics and the most crucial element of humanity.

While violence and dehumanisation occur simultaneously, it can be argued that it is violence that brings dehumanisation to justify itself, and it is not the consequence of the dehumanisation process. This need for justification is important because it can defeat essentialist approaches to violence as an aspect of human nature. Paradoxically, harming others can be simultaneously attractive and repellent and it signals a situation in which inhibitions against violence must be curved—and dehumanisation is one of the necessary ways to achieve this (Livingstone-Smith, 2016). If one locates the emerging violence at the level of an isolated individual, violence can be seen as a natural response to perceived metaphysical threats posed from the Other. Nevertheless, from an Arendtian perspective, humans already exist interactively and in plurality; therefore, dehumanisation becomes necessary for enabling violent behaviour, which arises partially in conflict within the subject. This only reasserts the important link between humanity, plurality and politics, and the anti-political character of violence as presented by Arendt.

At this point it becomes necessary to briefly discuss the implications that such perceptions of humanity bring to Arendt's work and the criticisms they have drawn. To begin with, besides accusations for elitism, Arendt has also been criticised for prejudice against peoples that she has criticised as 'primitive' in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and her discussion of Imperialism. For example, Casas-Klausen (2010, p.208) analyses how, even though Arendt skilfully avoids succumbing wholly to racism, one can still read the 'antiprimitivist friction between nature and humanity that persists within her critical phenomenological approach'. It would be insincere to deny that Arendt defines humanity from her own situated position bearing Eurocentrism and the bias of "the pride of the Western man", something that can be explained both by the intellectual roots and the historical context of her work. Indeed, Arendt writes very critically of both indigenous Africans and the Boers:

> The world of native savages was a perfect setting for men who had escaped the reality of civilization. Under a merciless sun, surrounded by an entirely hostile nature, they were confronted with human beings who, living without the future of a purpose and the past of an accomplishment, were as incomprehensible as the inmates of a madhouse (Arendt, 1973, p.190).

Thankfully, today it is unacceptable for an intellectual to speak of the predicament of the isolated European who has to live 'in a world of black savages' (ibid, p.191). There is no intension whatsoever to provide any sort of excuse for such approaches here. Since the focus is on Arendt's ontological assumptions and her approach to what constitutes violence, it is important to briefly explore whether such passages of her work are consistent with her views on plurality, human dignity and freedom, or if such comments signify outright inconsistency and hypocrisy.

If one remains aware of Arendt's ontological commitments, it becomes clear that her objection was not the "betrayal of the colonizing mission" (Casas-Kalusen, 2010, p.406) of the Western man in Africa. Casas-Klausen himself recognises that Arendt primarily understands humanity as humans surrounding themselves with a world they have fabricated historically. Although we can criticise Arendt for failing to recognise the indigenous community outside established western categories, we can also see how her concern was not to safeguard colonialism's civilisation mission but to examine cases that she perceived as deviating from the political purpose she defended. In her own words:

> 'What made them [indigenous people] different from other human beings was not the colour of their skin but the fact that they behaved like a part of nature, that they treated nature as their undisputed master, that they had not created a human world, a human reality, and that therefore nature had remained, in all its majesty, the only overwhelming reality-compared to which they appeared to be phantoms, unreal and ghostlike. They were, as it were, "natural" human beings who lacked the specifically human character, the specifically human reality, so that when European men massacred them they somehow were not aware that they had committed murder' (Arendt, 1973, p.192).

This links back to the earlier discussion on dehumanisation, according to which Arendt does not praise or justify the violent massacring but explains how lack of recognition and shared meaning, which only political action can generate, invite violence to human affairs. Following from this, her comments on indigenous peoples' dehumanisation does not negotiate the value of their biological life but criticises humanity in political terms. This is a questionable assumption as it acknowledges only a very limited conception of political action, without any thought on the shape that political action might take in indigenous communities. At least Arendt, even though apparently Eurocentric, remains consistent in her argument and equally applies the same standards to the settlers' case. For Arendt the Boers 'living in an environment which they had no power to transform into a civilised world, they could discover no higher value than themselves' (Arendt, 1973, p.197). Their sense of privilege not only had no foundation, but their failure to build a public space and a shared world among peers can only mean that they had no hope for freedom themselves. The point underlined here is similar to Fanon's description of a colonial violence that cripples colonised and colonisers alike, which will be developed later on. In the present case, Arendt openly criticises these Europeans in a similar fashion:

> Outside all social restraint and hypocrisy, against the backdrop of native life, the gentleman and the criminal felt not only the closeness of men who share the same colour of skin, but the impact of a world of infinite possibilities for crimes committed in the spirit of play, for the combination of horror and laughter, that is for the full realisation of their own phantom-like existence. Native life lent these ghostlike events a seeming guarantee against all consequences because anyhow it looked to these men like a "mere play of shadows" (Arendt, 1973, p.190).

There is nothing implying a sense of sympathy, let alone superiority in this passage. Arendt only expresses her usual lament and denunciation of humans who, instead of building a world and bringing themselves to the light of the public sphere, remain in isolation and the violence associated with pre-political conditions. Arendt does not recognise these settlers as individuals with their own story but "the shadows of events", a "crowd" that had not steeped out of society

but had been spat out by it (Arendt, 1973, p.189). Arendt does not criticise them for having become superfluous and excluded from their original societies from an elitist attitude. Arguably, she would encourage the establishment of a "countersociety through which men could find their way back into a human world of fellowship and purpose' (ibid). Arendt expresses sympathy for the excluded who wish to become part of a political community but not for those who remain in isolation or seek passive assimilation; it is the stagnation of political potential that Arendt criticises.

Gines (2014) claims that Arendt does not connect the "Negro question" with the "Jewish question" and seems to distinguish them as social and political issues respectively. This can be explained through Arendt's categories of the parvenu and the pariah; the parvenu has sought to escape the pariah status by assimilation into a society which will never accept the parvenu, while the conscious pariah rejects assimilation and remains free (ibid, p.9). Without attempting an evaluation of the validity of such categories here, it can be said that they are consistent with Arendt's thought, and her distrust towards abstract humanism and assimilationism that Gines herself admits. These categories are not strictly tailored around specific identities. Before the Holocaust, many Jews had indeed tried to assimilate as parvenus; however, the rise of Fascism signalled their stripping of all their political rights reducing them to their biological status. Considering Arendt's main concern with the potential and freedom of the public sphere, it is understandable that she upholds the political status for the pariah. Arendt would not advocate assimilation of a group in a community but instead initiative to create a new political community in voluntary terms. It is the absolute persecution and total exclusion from all aspects of the public sphere that she is concerned with in her work on violence and totalitarianism.

Even though Arendt's approach to the civil rights of Black people appears problematic and limited, the issue of racism discussed here is not actually depoliticised in her thought. In fact, both racism and imperialism seem to be major threats to the political; imperialism, both in Europe and overseas, produced some of the conditions of "pan-thinking" that led to totalitarianism (Taylor, 2011, p.127). The major difference between imperialism within Europe and imperialism overseas seems to be both historical and functional. Powerful nations that became world imperial powers used a discourse of complete dehumanisation of indigenous peoples, who were not seen as human at all. In the case of Central and Eastern European powers, which were not engaged in such expansion, power claims were mostly expressed in terms of redefined greatness (ibid, p. 128). Therefore, in their nationalist discourse the persecuted groups were seen as part of humanity and had to be labelled as inferior due to having specific characteristics, for example an essentialist understanding of "Jewishness". In a sense, the extreme brutality of genocidal violence might rest exactly on the human, psychological elements of the victims as part of intersubjective power relations (Lang, 2010), as opposed to the trivialised violence against a completely dehumanised group.

The Jews were already portrayed as a distinct group, not because of their actions, but in terms of characteristics and psychology, an identity innate as opposed to political, initially convenient for assimilation due to downplaying religious identity (Arendt, 1973, p.7). This is key for Arendt, because it opened the door to Nazi racism grounding itself in biology and proclaiming the biological threat of Jewish blood to the Reich. The point to be emphasised here is that for Arendt all forms of European imperialism were linked to some form of racism that eventually rooted in dehumanisation by reduction to human biological status. Her ontological insistence on separating the biological and social elements from a political concept of humanity rests in exorcizing totalitarian threats from the political at all costs more than providing detailed

guidance of “good politics”. This is the main complication of Arendt’s work which led many to criticise her on the topic of racism, which is not easily resolved due to her ambiguous language in describing Black people and colonial subjects.

Finally, Taylor (2011, p.131) reads Arendt as being critical towards the perspective of European imperialism in her analysis of it, since it aims at uncovering the roots of totalitarianism; this is definitely a reasonable assumption. In any case, the perceived lack of clarity has probably more to do with her actual focus being totalitarianism and less about concealing her unsympathetic attitude towards disempowered groups. Perhaps the most valid criticism on this issue is that Arendt failed ‘to assimilate the violent imperial origins of racial hierarchies into her idealisation of the American republic’ (Owens, 2017, p.422). In Arendt’s efforts to safeguard the political against totalitarianism, American republicanism and its institutions was an ally. For this reason, Arendt did not include the US in her account of racial imperialism and preferred to downplay the “negro question” as an issue of domestic nature, a social question, instead of relying on a wider set of assumptions out of which totalitarianism springs. The logic of separating the social and political spheres will be explored, but first it is crucial to understand Arendt’s understanding of power and the state in this context.

Power, the sovereign and the construction of meaning

Arendtian thought is notorious for separating the social and political spheres and classifying many political phenomena as social issues according to that dichotomy. The ‘socialisation’ of rights in the context of domestic state affairs is suggestive of Arendt’s scepticism of the sovereign and disillusionment with human rights on the one hand, and her non-abstract concept of humanity on the other. An abstract concept of humanity alone cannot guarantee protection of one’s rights; only the sovereign nation state can demand human rights protection for its

citizens. For Arendt simply being human, in the biological sense, signifies an "abstract nakedness"; this is evident in the case of the status of colonial subjects and their dehumanisation but also revealing the racialisation of human rights (Capurri, 2016). It is possible that Arendt, realising the danger of reducing humanity to its biology, saw the politicisation of humanity as a separate public sphere as the only meaningful approach. The problem that arises here, however, is the domination of this sphere by the sovereign nation-state which Arendt herself distrusted politically. At this point, it is important to briefly contextualise Arendt's view of the sovereign state, especially in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

The spirit of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* goes beyond an examination and critique of nationalism and fascism; it is a critique of the modern configuration of power and its consequences on the political. Arendt does not propose a reform of the state so that the totalitarian experience will not return into the political, because the main problem does not lie in expressions of nationalism but the structure of the modern state itself. As long as the state centralises power and excludes citizens from meaningful involvement in politics, the only radical solution for Arendt is to replace it with a new type of political organisation in which power can be diffused. This is why Arendt's work can be read as providing a direct link between the idea of participatory government and the idea of being free (Lederman, 2019, p.3). Specifically, a participatory form of government based on citizen councils can preserve the revolutionary spirit and prevent the transformation of the state into an instrument of an abstract idea of the nation.

This explains why *The Human Condition* is an attempt to recover what has been lost from the political sphere due to the destructive nature of totalitarianism. Arendt attempts this by reintroducing the idea of humanity and making it central in politics again. A key obstacle to

non-violent coexistence of humanity is the centralisation and usurpation of political power by the state. More relevant than ever today, the fate of stateless people, the superfluous refugees without a voice in the political sphere, is the most flagrant example here. In Arendtian thought, the only way to fight against racism and an exclusionary categorisation of individuals is to form a new political organisation which will correspond to the whole of humanity and diffuse power, instead of being dominated by centralised state power. Once state power dominates the political sphere, action and hence freedom are in danger. For Arendt, the right to belong to a political community is the main prerequisite for individual freedom. Only in a genuinely public space can individuals be empowered through speech and action, since power for Arendt rests in numbers. In both Arendt and Heidegger, freedom in existential terms means that one has a place for "being in the world" among others and making sense of life against existential angst through shared meaning (Mahrdt, 2017). Loss of the political space means loss of the power of speech and subsequently the inability to exist free among equals. This is for Arendt the most flagrant manifestation of violence.

The importance and primacy of the public sphere for Arendt is evident in her discussion of the distinction between the social and the political and the fear that in modern times the first is overtaking the second. It is important to elaborate on this point as well as link this distinction to the different aspects of the *vita activa* to provide a context for the theorisation of power and violence. The public sphere represents a 'space of appearances' in which individuals can reveal who they are through their speech and political action. This has been read by scholars both as a metaphorical space (Rensmann, 2012) and one which enables actual face to face human interaction (Benhabib 2003, Lederman 2009). For example, Benhabib (2003, p. 201) discusses a holistic and epistemic function of the public sphere, according to which individuals interpret each other's actions and construct shared meanings of the world. These meanings are not

necessarily unanimous but their construction privileges direct human interaction and presupposes certain degree of convergence around a shared ethos (ibid). This also explains why for Arendt the public sphere is political rather than social, as meaning has to transcend narrow self-interests into creating an enlarged mentality, an amalgam of shared meanings not previously existing. Further to this, Rensmann (2012, p.146) claims that Arendt's understanding of the public sphere is not limited to territorial borders. True political space can emerge whenever people interact for a shared purpose, while genuine political action can cut across all boundaries, opening the potential for transnational communities to emerge. This not only confirms Arendt's mistrust of the sovereign taking over the political space but also shows that the separation between the social and the political does not imply the political is narrowly defined by Arendt.

Despite the disagreement over the exact spatial nature of Arendt's public sphere, its most important characteristic is the link it forges between freedom and meaning. Claims in the literature position Arendt in the existentialist tradition of political thought (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1991). It seems fair to read Arendt's concept of freedom not just as a capacity to act freely, as a form of power, but also as liberation from existential anxiety and a sense of lack of answers on the nature of life. This aspect of her work will later link to Camus' work on existential angst and nihilism and the response of rebellion. Arendt's existential and phenomenological roots in this case are also linked to Heidegger's thought on anxiety and human existence as being-in-the-world. While fear is caused by a concrete threat, existential threats as experienced by the subject cause anxiety vis-à-vis the horizon of human possibilities, and therefore cause an impetus to action (Caivano and Murphy, 2017). For Arendt, action requires the courage to overcome such anxiety and break with prevailing attitudes in order to appear in the public sphere and reveal oneself. The political is not only a sphere in the spatial

sense; it is literally a sphere of life in the sense of an existential condition and this is why it can coincide with freedom as a condition.

In the public sphere, through exposure to others and potential affirmation of this exposure, the individual is part of collective construction of meaning, as discussed earlier. This not only enables one to feel free (always among others) but also offers one a share of the power which is produced collectively. Many thinkers have focused on the generation of power, or legitimate sources of power in the public sphere, but Arendt insists on the prerequisite that structures of non-distorted communication find their expression in it (Habermas, 1994, p.216). In other words, the fluidity of such communication must be guaranteed for the production of power since it cannot be stored and only 'springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse' (Arendt, 1998, p.200). Power needs to rest in numbers and is different to force and strength. This is because Arendt, contrary to traditional philosophy, does not see power as rule and domination but as communication and cooperation. Yet, for many, Arendt seems to fail to discuss domination and exploitation of those cases categorised as social or private spheres (James, 1987). It will become clear that the distinction between such spheres and the respective conditions of the *vita activa* is in accordance with Arendt's ontology and does not fall short of the goals of empowerment and freedom.

Vita activa and the link between necessity and violence

At this point, further discussion of *vita activa* and its three conditions–labour, work and action–is required in order to explain why Arendt was so adamant about the prominence of political action and the public sphere over what she thought of as social matters. This will in turn explain the link between violence and necessity and show why Arendt considers violence not to be a political concept. To begin with, for Arendt labour is the activity which corresponds to the

biological process of the human body and represents life itself, while work is external to life and nature and represents "worldliness", the artificial, man-made world of things (Arendt, 1998, p.7). This dichotomy feeds into the distinctions between the *animal laborans* and the *homo faber*, i.e. unproductive and productive labour, the private household and the public political realm (ibid, p.85). For Arendt, pre-modern contempt for labour associated it with slavery and and the human longing for freedom from necessity. Slaves were the ones to labour for the purpose of consumption, leaving nothing substantial behind, yet allowing their masters the freedom and the potential to be productive (ibid, p.87). This explains functionally how humans manage to engage in political action only after they have freed themselves from the burden of securing survival, without suggesting that structurally slavery and exploitation are desirable.

Interestingly, Arendt's analysis of labour espouses many Marxist claims on its character, and even certain views on exploitation. For example, Arendt critically explains that violent oppression and capitalist exploitation can be organised in such a way that 'the labour of some suffices for the life of all' (ibid, p.88). Nevertheless, Arendt's emphasis is not on exploitation and the fact that one's labour can be used for the reproduction of many, but rather on the problem that labour cannot produce 'anything but life'(ibid). The Marxist understanding of value as labour indicates exactly this: that the labouring process and its outcome are indistinguishable. In other words, labour is an activity that aims merely at sustaining and reproducing life as it is. Humans aim for survival until they reach the end of their lives and leave behind other humans to take their place and perpetuate this circle; simply nourishing and preserving the human body for its short existence in the world suffices for this end goal.

Opposite to this, work and its product, the human artifice, are characterised by durability and refer to the practice of fabrication. Arendt sees their value similarly to how Adam Smith defines it, in terms of exchange and linked to productivity (ibid, p.136). However, since Arendt's focus is not on political economy, she expands her analysis to the works of art as the ideal product of work. This is because her main concern is not with the use value of human artefacts, but instead with the implications that work has for the human condition. Durability and the process of reification are the most important elements of these implications. Through work, a human being can move beyond nature and transform something according to a thought model, 'an image beheld by the eye of the mind' (ibid, p.140). Artwork is notably praised in this context because, even though art objects have no apparent utility, they have impressive durability that keeps them 'almost untouched by the corroding effect of natural processes', while they represent a real metamorphosis of human thought into tangible objects (ibid, p.167). Following from this, the product of the human mind can become tangible and outlive the mind, but in a sense remains tied to it while being appropriated by other humans; it serves as a bridge between the two.

Critics of Arendt's work in relation to Marx and labour are focusing especially on her examination of the conditions of labour and work while avoiding the condition of action (Suchting, 1962). The problem with this approach is that it completely misses Arendt's viewpoint and purpose of her work. A close reading of Arendt's work reveals that she had no great interest in engaging with the main elements of Marxist thought, which she used only to place emphasis and prove her point on the special condition of political action and the primacy of the public sphere. Arendt herself states the importance of distinguishing between the three categories and explains that Karl Marx's fascination with the unprecedented levels of industrial productivity of early capitalism led him to confuse labour for work (Arendt, 1998, p.87). Still,

critical voices fix themselves around what is perceived as a disagreement between Arendt and Marx on the merits of the working class as opposed to the activities all classes are capable of.

The concept of *animal laborans* is mistakenly seen as a social class category and should instead be treated as a category that only corresponds to Arendt's distinctions of the human condition aspects, common to all. Arendt can be read as hostile towards the working class and her condemnation of the dominance of the labour activity over work and action can be taken for elitism. Arendt's problematisation of labour, however, rests on the fact that all human activity has been reduced to labouring and the human condition is tied primarily to necessity and the mere reproduction of life. In this way all serious activities, irrespectively of their fruits, are called labour, and every activity which is not necessary for the life process is subsumed under playfulness (ibid, p.127). This is lamentable because, far from emancipating the working class, this can be seen as actually reducing every social class to a circular mode of life reproduction and excludes it from the merits of the public sphere (Levin, 1979). It is the very logic of capitalism which alienates humans from other potential activities and restricts them to a circle of labouring for consumables and mere (re)production.

Further to this, Arendt is concerned that the biological element of necessity inherent in the labouring process can allow violence to creep into the political sphere. Let us consider here the regular yet unfounded claim that violence is part of human nature and therefore it cannot be ousted from human interaction. This turns politics into a sphere of conflict regulation and to an extent encourages us to refrain from discussion of the actual roots of violent behaviour, normalizing such phenomena and prohibiting the potential for change. Arendt eschews claims on human nature and attempts to examine human activity by categorizing it into different spheres; her political ontology does not consider violence as an integral part of it. This allows

her to reflect upon a political sphere free from violence, by acknowledging the phenomenon of violent behaviour while placing it in a different category of human interaction. Violence tied to biological survival can then be seen as merely one potential of human behaviour, but one still has the potential to act beyond the drive of biological instincts. This reveals the reasons behind Arendt's depreciation of necessity compared to the political. Poverty and hunger, the inability to cover biological needs are not belittled, but humans have the potential to act beyond them. The political cannot rest upon battle for survival and humans are not condemned to destroy each other for biological survival which means little without the presence of others.

It is interesting to mention here Arendt's view of individuals turning into violent and amorphous masses under totalitarian regimes. Fascism thrives when people are reduced to their biological elements and everyday law-abiding citizens, family men and job holders who mind their own business, can easily justify murder when they perceive threats to their survival and well-being. Arendt (1973, p.338) described this process in the *Origins of Totalitarianism:*

> The mass man whom Himmler organised for the greatest crimes ever committed in history bore the feature of the philistine rather than of the mob man, and it was the bourgeois who in the midst of the ruins of his world worried about nothing so much as his private security, was ready to sacrifice everything –belief, honour, dignity– on the slightest provocation. Nothing proved easier to destroy than the privacy and private morality of people who thought of nothing but safeguarding their private lives.

This reveals an important link that the political provides between the individual and fellow-humans. The individual can relate to others through the plurality of the public sphere and retain subjectivity while coexisting into a whole. We can then read Arendt's mistrust of the growing influence of the social sphere as a danger of breaking this link. When the public sphere is broken, the individual cannot pass to the political through society but instead remains trapped and becomes part of an indistinctive mass in the social sphere. Even worse, this mass is

burdened with the violence that biological necessity carries turning human beings into living beings.

This summarises Arendt's insistence on distinguishing between labour, work and action, and separating human interaction from necessity. As explained above, Arendt did not attempt to emancipate the proletariat, but she did not attempt to condemn it either; her efforts were towards exalting the public sphere, which she saw as the precondition for freedom. Therefore, *The Human Condition* is not a manifesto for liberation but rather a guide to freedom, which can potentially be enjoyed by every human being, all of which are capable of labour, work and action, as part of their human condition. The link between action and freedom can be justified in relation to life's natural circle of natality and mortality, which will reveal how Arendt situates political action within it.

Natality and the power of beginnings

For Arendt, the basis of any human community is mortality. She conceived every human life as a story to be told, which spans between birth and death, and this in a sense represents every human being's ultimate potential (Arendt, 1958). Birth is linked to a new beginning and therefore the potential for change, while death represents a final fixation (ibid, p.192) and these are the only natural limits to human action. It is birth that brings us into the world with the potential to introduce our action into the world or to retreat in isolation. For this reason, it is indeed action that remains of political value for Arendt, while our birth and death in themselves are biological conditions which we experience alone as individuals outside the community. However, this does not mean that for Arendt birth and death are anti-political. Frost (2018, p.353) in an effort to read Arendt to examine death in terms of political renewal, claimed that 'action at the point of death, action that invites death, can be political'. This comes from her

reading of Arendt on the "hero par excellence" the actor who—not out of escapism— can master life and face premature death as a consequence of action. The greatness of this action should not be seen with emphasis on self-sacrifice but on the loyalty to experience and political action, irrespectively of its unpredictability.

The main argument becomes complicated, however, considering that Arendt sees violence as anti-political. Given the common association made between death and violence, the question that arises is how death specifically could not be anti-political, when violence is. One suggestion here is to consider Arendt's insistence that violence is an instrument, and it cannot be categorised as political action. Following from this, the problem arises only as long as death is seen as a mere case of futile violence, either as a form of escapism specifically, or more generally as an instrument to achieve certain ends. For example, recent literature has focused on the topic of martyrdom in this context (Michelsen, 2015). Seeing the choice of death as means to a political end, as protest, or even as symbolism that passes a message, misses out the significance it might have as an end itself —the ultimate end.

In her work *On Revolution*, Arendt (1963, p.133) has criticised 'futile eruptions of anger' against the human condition. Such practices might be used tactically to bring liberation, but they cannot generate freedom, which has to be produced through interaction in the public sphere. Reaching back to the argument that *bios* is the human life we can build to remedy mortality and futility of biological life, and the action of *bios* rests upon new beginnings, then death can earn a place in the political by being brought not by instrumental violence but as action that aims at bringing change and inviting something new. How can death, the ultimate finale, be framed as a new beginning? One needs to remember here Arendt's claim that action, once performed, takes its own course and has unexpected consequences which in a sense move

beyond the individual and affect the community and the world. The fragility of action indicates that it can be the event that leaves its origins, the individual, and links one with others into a whole. The decision of one to perish and leave the world could be seen not as an irrational decision but as a final choice to change the face of the world by one's departure. While taking a human life is violent and is linked to instrumentality, death in self-sacrifice is violent in the sense of a rupture that brings a shock to the ordinary course of things. Then, it only rests upon those left behind to engage in further action and make something of this change.

This approach also agrees with Arendt's claim that action encloses a risk and cannot be experienced in safety and comfort. Without implying that action necessarily needs to be linked to death, it is clear that Arendt sees it as a process which is challenging and even threatening to the actor. The reward for such risk taking is to make a great story out of one's life and build one's experience in these terms (1998, p.97). In this context, a picture can be sketched in which the subject experiences its own story, while setting it out to the world in the form of new action, all of this in the timeframe between life and death. These two fixed twin concepts of life and death are the only given natural constraints to an otherwise immense human potentiality. Within these biological limits, the subject should choose to be or not be in any chosen manner, including being in isolation from the *vita activa* or even seizing to exist. Arendt's work does not attempt to place any further limitations to the existing ones she examines, yet she attempts to convince us that political action is the only way in which one can truly be in the world and experience life in full potential, hoping that once the end point has been reached, traces of this action might remain in human history.

If death can, under certain circumstances, have a political character, birth is for Arendt at the centre of political action as seen through the prism of natality. Birth as an event is prominent

in Arendt not in terms of biological reproduction of the human species but for its impact on the political sphere. In other words, a birth is for Arendt the introduction to the human world of a new source of potential. In Arendt's own words (1958, p. 176):

> With word and deed, we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance. This insertion is not forced upon us by necessity, like labour, and it is not prompted by utility, like work. It may be stimulated by the presence of others whose company we may wish to join, but it is never conditioned by them; its impulse springs from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we respond by beginning something new on our own initiative.

Therefore, our entrance into the political does not coincide with our biological birth but rather represents a "second birth" initiated by word and deed, that is action. Biological birth only provides the individual with a "naked" physical appearance—which could also be read as "bare life" here— and it is up to the individual to speak and reveal oneself to others.

It is important to make this distinction prominent because, even though Arendt's differentiation between *bios* and *zoe* is central in her thought, criticisms are still raised towards her work, which sometimes misinterpret Arendt's intentions. In this case, Söderbäck (2018, p.277) discusses the feminist critique of Arendtian natality as a notion which 'does not highlight the concept of birth as coming from a mother's womb but accepts the Greek meaning of birth as coming from nothing'. There is validity in the claim that Arendt uses birth in an abstract manner; however, it is natality as a more abstract concept, compared to the concrete event of a physical birth, that matters here. Arendt indeed uses the notion of creation *ex nihilio* but does so not to describe the nature of physical birth, but to show its impact on the political sphere. The new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is acting. The difference here is that of the emergence of a new life in the natural world compared to the emergence of a new subject into the human community.

The use of the creation *ex nihilio* here is not accidental but actually crucial to Arendt's theory of action and her understanding of political power. Arendt's work on natality served the purpose of theorizing the foundation of a new political space, without any links to the past, mainly as a response to totalitarian destruction of the political. Therefore, the focus is not on the action to decide out of a number of existing options but instead on novel action that comes in total break with the past. This kind of action is a productive one and its product is political power. Then, the problem with the creation *ex nihilio* is to find a source of legitimacy external to the newly founded political space, when the break with the past does not allow a continuation of legitimacy rooted in tradition. A solution to this problem comes if we consider that the source of new beginnings is natality, which for Arendt is an aspect of the very human condition. Hence, human condition itself becomes for Arendt the source of legitimacy and the limit beyond which the new creation cannot reach without destroying itself (Schell, 2002). It should be noted that the limits of action here are not rigid, since beyond them lies simple unpredictability and further novel action which serves the fluidity of the plural political sphere. The concepts of the creation ex nihilo and the total *break* with the past could provide us here with a useful insight on the idea of rupture in Arendt's work and the implications this could have on her approach to violence. As already explained, for Arendt, biological life, *zoe*, is cyclical and repetitive with no other purpose than reproduction of the species, and therefore it concerns all human beings collectively as a species. Opposite to this, individual life is conceivable in its difference only as political life (*bios*) and Arendt visualises it as a straightforward force that cuts across the cycle of biological life. In her words: 'This is mortality: to move along a rectilinear line in a universe where everything, if it moves at all, moves in a cyclical order' (Arendt, 1958, p.571). Such force is indeed the potential of the individual to initiate action and generate political power among fellow-humans. However, the

conceptualisation of ‘cutting across’, as well as ‘breaking with the past’, seem to attribute a violent character to such political forces. Indeed, Arendt herself states that ‘purposeful human activities [which] do violence to nature because they disturb what, in the absence of mortals, would be the eternal quiet of being forever that rests or swings within itself’ (ibid). This quotation clearly creates the impression of a rupture as a force of life intervening into a stable order of things. This is the meeting point between birth and natality, where biological and political life overlap, and biological birth signals political natality. Past this point, the actor shall transform “human being” into subjective existence.

Stemming from this distinction between *bios* and *zoe*, natality and birth, we can read into Arendt’s work a subsequent categorisation of one function of violence that concerns biological life and another that concerns an entrance to political life. The violence that appears to be linked to the biological aspect of life–and is usually revoked in the argument which considers violence as part of “human nature”–could identify with physical violence and the realm of necessity. The other function of violence, which can be found in the political sphere, is sketched here as a ‘force’ which introduces subjectivity into the world in the form of a rupture. Arendt’s fascination with these notions of political novelty and rupture are evident as she described them as extraordinary and defined them as ‘the subject matter of history’ (ibid, 572). One should distinguish between violence, force, conflict, rupture and agonism and not assume ontological ties between such phenomena. The reason is that Arendt is a thinker who emphasizes affirmative concepts in her political ontology. For example, Vatter (2014) disagrees with the idea that Arendt has tried to completely disconnect politics from biological life and counterargues that her concept of natality can be read as a biopolitical concept that counters the biopolitics of death in totalitarianism. In other words, Arendt’s theoretical project only moves towards separating politics from all connections to biological life so that totalitarianism

is prevented. Vatter reads in Arendt an effort to respond to the negative consequences of biopolitics with affirmative biopolitics, and natality is the way to achieve this (2014, p. 141). If birth and natality can be expressed in political terms of plurality, then life becomes equal with human potential and it becomes harder to reduce it to bare bodies.

Following from this emphasis on affirmative concepts, for Arendt, the central experience of totalitarianism is loneliness (Arendt, 1973, p.474). On the opposite side, natality is constructed in terms of plurality and biological birth receives a special symbolism in this context. In an effort to reconstruct Augustine's work, Arendt reinterprets creation not as the beginning of Adam but instead the beginning of man and woman, in other words, two-ness and not one-ness as the common progenitor of the species (Vatter, 2014, p.144). Arendt's achievement becomes twofold: plurality of the human kind is restored, but also freedom is re-introduced in terms of agency. The first achievement, plurality, lies in the fact that the creation *ex nihilio* refers indeed to humans and not Man, in accordance with Arendtian political ontology. The second, framing freedom in terms of agency and plurality, lies in the fact that natality and birth are not the outcome of isolated though or action but interaction within the web of human relations. In an effort to overcome Kantian limits in comprehending freedom of action, Arendt has claimed that human freedom of action can be externally comprehended in terms of human agency (Tsao, 2002). This is why disclosure of the self during political action becomes so crucial and freedom cannot be attained in isolation.

To sum up, the political emerges out of a common world, which has to be negotiated and shaped by incorporating a plurality of truths through communication. Every addition of a newcomer brings into the human world a new source of potential; if affirmed, this potential will renew the world by transforming existing shared truths. This process of renewal can be thought of as

a rupture exactly because it does not reformulate existing truths but brings in something novel and unpredictable. Instead of a violent destructive force, Arendtian rupture involves a productive power generated in conditions of plurality. Considering this rich context of Arendtian political ontology, power and violence in her work reveal themselves as an antithesis. On the one hand, a new beginning fuels the ongoing production of power and meaning in the plural public space. On the other hand, such power is fragile and dependent upon plurality; therefore, instrumental violence hinders plural communication and power production, eventually destroying the political sphere and all meaning within it. For Arendt, totalitarianism is the most extreme type of violence in which the plurality of individuals turns into a mass and the human world becomes void of shared meaning. In the following part of the analysis, the concept of the potential for rupture becomes clearer through Arendt's work on revolution, eventually leading to a discussion of totalitarian violence and its destructive impact upon political power.

Revolution, Violence, and the Unpredictability of Action.

Arendt's critique of modern revolutions is based on the criterion of the constitution of a public space where individuals can coexist in freedom. As it has been shown, freedom for Arendt, is a result of self-revelation and communication in the public sphere entailing positive action, and not a matter of a negative conception of human rights. This implies that the political sphere has a merit of its own as its purpose is not instrumental in the sense of protecting subjects. Arendt has praised the American Revolution as historically the most successful in its task of constructing a free political space, and her admiration of the council system and participatory democracy is a proof of that. This model of political participation is Arendt's response not only to Marxist thought but also to modern liberal thought in general, and parliamentary politics more specifically. Keeping in mind Arendt's contempt for instrumental approaches to politics,

she has criticised the sociological tendency to study phenomena based only on their function, thus overlooking their substance and peculiarity (Baehr, 2002). Therefore, against normalisation of politics as a means to achieve freedom and guarantee rights, Arendt suggests that politics is an autonomous sphere and an end in itself. Politics is tautological to freedom because they take place simultaneously and are dependent upon each other.

Therefore, Arendt links her thoughts on revolution to her idea of beginning anew to construct the limited and fragile space where action takes place. This is summarised in her discussion of the *constitutio libertatis* (Arendt, 1990, p.141) as building up a shared world, which is radically new since it breaks with the continuity of the historical past. The argument put forward in this part of the analysis is that for Arendt revolution is the political action that moves the new beginning forward and generates freedom. It is never violent in the instrumental, anti-political sense of violence, but it represents a rupture in the sense of a moving force. The most authentic form of politics for Arendt is revolutionary politics in their radical and eruptive sense, because they allow the manifestation of human potential and spontaneity to break with automated continuities and be creative (Kateb, 2000, p.134). Perhaps what is even more radical in Arendt's thought is the idea that revolution, as a capacity for a new beginning, represents an aspect of the human condition that is far from alien in the human world. Revolution is not an anomaly or an exception but instead an intrinsic aspect of the political sphere. This has nothing to do with the idea of the permanent revolution that Arendt criticises as the failure of the historical cases of Russia or China but refers to the maintenance of the revolutionary spirit of change and creativity. This is an idea also espoused by Fanon, as the third chapter will show. While most revolutionary beginnings pursued the aim of freedom and public happiness, this was not always the outcome as history has shown. The main question that arises then is how

this creative force can realise itself but not establish itself beyond the point where it will prevent future newcomers from doing the same.

The most prominent themes of Arendt's answer are the differentiation between liberation and freedom and the distinction between power and violence. Revolution for Arendt, when successful, is a political beginning which establishes a public space of freedom and plurality. Plurality refers to the power generated through common revolutionary action that leads to the foundation of freedom, the *constitutio libertatis*, which is the measure of success of revolution. The analysis will explain that what we usually examine as revolutionary violence is for Arendt simply a break with past conditions which brings change and liberation. Once liberation brings freedom through establishing the *consitutio libertatis*, power needs to keep being generated through plural action. It is hindering plural action that allows violence to creep into the political and annihilate power destroying freedom. As it will be shown, Arendt suggests that since politics is an end in itself, and freedom is what characterises it, the new foundation cannot be a rigid one but must allow the continuation of the revolutionary spirit in terms of generating change. In other words, revolution bears the characteristics of the political sphere as conceived by Arendt. Accordingly, its agonistic character must be maintained without that implying violence has a place in it after liberation has been achieved.

The distinctions between liberation and freedom, and power and violence, are closely linked. Arendt takes a clear position in her categorisation of such concepts when she criticises a not uncommon fate of unsuccessful revolutionary attempts which end up with submission under a powerful conqueror:

> Such is indeed the common fate of a rebellion which is not followed by revolution, and hence the common fate of most so-called revolutions. If, however, one keeps in mind that the end of rebellion is liberation, while the end of revolution is the foundation of freedom, the political scientist at least will know how to avoid the pitfall of the historian

> who tends to place his emphasis upon the first and violent stage of rebellion and liberation, on the uprising against tyranny, to the detriment of the quieter second stage of revolution and constitution, because all the dramatic aspects of history seem to be contained in the first stage, and perhaps, also because the turmoil of liberation has also frequently defeated the revolution (Arendt, 1990, p. 142).

This passage is not necessarily an attempt to value the one notion over the other. Since Arendt's work is clearly focused on change and a plural political sphere, liberation is in some cases necessary in order to clear the path for revolutionary change and the establishment of the new. In this sense, we can assume that the violence of liberation is for Arendt a phase before the actual establishment of the public space; in other words, it is a pre-political form of violence. Once plurality and the public sphere have emerged among the revolutionaries, power springs out of political action and keeps regenerating itself. In this context, an intrusion of violence as an instrument of control and fixation of action would necessarily destroy such power and the plurality of the public sphere. This explains why Arendt would claim that this violence is antipolitical and destructive of power. As an instrument, violence can be justified in a struggle for liberation, but it cannot remain in the public sphere forever, let alone be seen as ontologically linked to power and politics.

It is necessary to unpack the perplexities of revolutionary action as it involves both change and creation. This shall shed more light on Arendt's work on power and violence. Arendt herself uses the term perplexity to describe the deadlock of revolutionary action that needs to be productive of something substantial and new but also allow fragile action to sustain itself and remain fluid. It is useful to read her exact words here:

> If foundation was the aim and the end of revolution, then the revolutionary spirit was not merely the spirit of beginning something new but of starting something permanent and enduring; a lasting institution, embodying this spirit and encouraging it to new achievements, would be self-defeating. From which it unfortunately seems to follow that nothing threatens the very achievements of revolution more dangerously and more acutely than the spirit which has brought them about (Arendt, 1990, p.232).

When Arendt is thinking about revolution she considers the whole process including the initial rupture that brings liberation from domination; however, she locates the revolutionary core in the common action of establishing a solid foundation, the public space of freedom. The key here is to emphasise action over the foundation; politics as action is the purpose of revolution while the establishment of a foundation secures the space in which action generates itself in order to protect its fragile nature. In this sense, her thoughts on revolution and liberation cannot be far from Fanon's view of decolonisation as a process that demands liberation but also reshaping subjectivity and creating a new nation, as the third chapter will show. Arendt, being concerned with the political sphere, is not primarily interested in the pre-political violence that liberates but seeks to emphasise the conditions under which the revolutionary promise is fulfilled. Therefore, she states that:

> violence is no more adequate to describe the phenomenon of revolution than change; only where change occurs in the sense of a new beginning […] where the liberation from oppression aims at least at the constitution of freedom can we speak of revolution (Arendt, 1990, p.35).

The emerging contradiction lies in the fact that change and fluidity need to be channelled into a more stable foundation. Given the fragility of action and Arendt's perception of power as something that cannot be stored but simply expires and regenerates, the challenge remains that a foundation materialises the revolution without restricting future change and the necessary unpredictability this involves. In other words, the problem is that the political cannot become fixed within specific boundaries in the long run without risking the death of the revolutionary spirit.

Perhaps, it is useful to follow briefly Arendt's comparison of the French and American revolutions to understand her concerns and criteria of successful revolutionary action through historical examples. Arendt's comments on the American Revolution, which she praises over

the French, have been seen as historically invalid elitism due to downplaying the social element in general and the slave system specifically. However, in the case of the French revolution, Arendt attempts to criticise the loss of the revolutionary spirit, which occurs from a conceptual distinction between a spiritual revolutionary element in retreat and a material revolutionary element in expansion (Arnold, 2014). This will become clear through discussion of her criticism on the "social question". As already discussed earlier, Arendt opposed biological and social concerns finding their way into the political sphere, the main danger involved being lack of freedom and the intrusion of violence.

Arendt's comparison of the French and American revolutions is a topic widely present in the literature. Arendt has been criticised for writing "bad history" and completely misinterpreting, in a sense with naïve enthusiasm, the republican endeavour in American Politics (Disch, 2011) and also for obscuring the presence of the social question in the American Revolution (Nisbet, 1977). From a historian's viewpoint, her work is very normative and her conceptual categories so arbitrary that become impossible to fit into concrete historical examples (Hobsbawm, 2011). Nevertheless, we should acknowledge Arendt's commitment to examining politics uncoupled from traditional political philosophy and in a phenomenological style of narration where the historical dimension is mediated by concern for present and novel experience (Buckler, 2007). In any case, the purpose of engaging with her work here is to dissect her argument on revolutionary action and political change and set out her relevant principles, not to offer an account of the merit of her work in terms of historiography. Even if Arendt's understanding is biased in this context, it can still help us identify her criteria of a successful revolution and explain her views on violence further.

Arendt's account of the French failure and the American success depend on the respective attempts to establish a lasting yet politically active space that carries within it the so-called revolutionary spirit. Arendt acknowledges that the French revolution in its beginning embraced the principle of popular sovereignty, in terms of empowerment, but soon derailed from its political aims due to the social invading alongside the concern of poverty. Accordingly, Arendt disagrees with the Marxist critique to the French revolution on the grounds of failure to provide a social remedy, instead of pointing at the failure to generate freedom (Arendt, 1990, p.62).

On the other side, the American revolution is praised by Arendt because popular sovereignty not only was not sacrificed to the social but managed to produce the constitution as its political foundation. Arendt refuses to read the American constitution primarily as a guarantee of property rights and individual rights in general, or even as an effort to balance and limit political power (Gordon, 2007, p.116). Instead she locates truly political and democratic motives in the decisions of the founding fathers. The form of revolutionary violence is also compared between the two cases. The American revolution is seen as involving a war of liberation, while the French a war of defence and aggression (Arendt, 1990, p.17). The violence of liberation definitely stands more chances to produce an outcome of freedom as opposed to the revengeful violence in a fight against poverty. It is not simply that Arendt values freedom over equality; her very idea of equality is adjacent to the freedom of the political. Arendt's notion of equality is reflected in coexistence among peers in the plurality of the public sphere. Therefore, equality is not a political goal but a by-product of political action; it is political and not social equality that interests Arendt.

For Arendt revolution has two stages: one of liberation and one of creation. Regarding the first, the French revolution sank into considerations of necessity and poverty and never managed to

move to actual political considerations of power and common action, while the American revolution met fortunate circumstances of certain security from extreme conditions of poverty so that the main concern in revolutionary thought was freedom (Betz, 1991). It has become clear that Arendt refuses an overlap of the social and political spheres and considers necessity linked to biological needs and therefore not having a place in the public sphere. Arendt is not hostile towards those suffering from deprivation but actually believes that poverty is to be addressed before and outside political considerations; its nature is administrative and pre-political (Arendt, 1990, p.91). The question of poverty and survival not only manifests more urgently than the need for freedom, but also its force appears more irresistible than a rebellion of the oppressed because it carries within the necessity and the violence of biological life (ibid, p.112).

Arendt refers to the social question as acute poverty which she defines as 'a state of constant wants and acute misery whose ignominy consists in its dehumanizing force' (Arendt, 1990, p.60). As poverty 'puts men under the absolute dictate of their bodies' (ibid) it becomes clear that Arendt's concern is the intrusion of biological needs into politics. For Arendt, the intrusion of the social question into revolutionary politics is what destroyed the potential of the French Revolution. We read that 'the transformation of the rights of Man into the rights of sans-culottes' was a turning point in which necessity took priority over freedom (ibid, p.61). Against reading intellectual snobbery and elitism in Arendt's work, it is essential to understand that the "Man" and the "*sans-culottes*" do not represent two separate groups that Arendt praises and condemns accordingly. Arguably, her intention here is not to exclude those in need from the category of "Men" and dehumanise them; instead Arendt criticises the use of class categories in what she perceives as human condition. As already discussed, Arendt understands humanity in terms of speech and action within a political sphere, irrespectively of material conditions,

and does not reduce it to the biological status of the species. In other words, the revolutionary subject is human because beyond biological needs also bears the right to freedom and action; therefore, reducing the subject to biological needs and the mere right to survival dehumanises and robs one from subjectivity and potential for action.

Arendt locates in Marx the thought process which surrenders freedom to necessity and uncovers its Hegelian roots. She argues that in the dialectical process all progress seems to be tied to necessity and freedom is no exception (Arendt, 1990, p.63). It is not surprising that this logic unravelled further so that revolution was conceptualised by the spectators of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including Hegel and Marx, as historical necessity, and violence also got framed as having a necessary role in politics and revolution. Given that Arendt saw change and revolution as aspects of human natality and therefore inherent to the human condition, she refuses to reduce spontaneity and the unpredictability of creative action to a chain of historical necessity. The idea of rupture also explains Arendt's mistrust of a dialectical process triggered by necessity. Her idea of natality and the initiation of beginning does not simply refer to creating something novel; the purpose is to bring into existence something that cannot be linearly traced back to a causal sequence. Initiating action does not simply create something new but something radically new (Holman, 2013, p.89). By neglecting the powerful rupture of change in favour of violence, revolution in the eyes of those 'drunk with freedom in the abstract sense' does not appear to be the result of human action but an external irresistible process (Arendt, 1990, p.49).

It has to be noted here that Arendt does not suggest that the divide between rich and poor has no violent or exploitative character. Quite the opposite, her fear is that unleashing such violence within the public sphere jeopardises freedom and meaningful political action (Tchir, 2017,

p.153). Would Arendt agree to endanger politics, plurality and freedom, in order to resolve the social question and end exploitation? Most of her critics would expect her not to, but one needs to keep in mind that for Arendt such endeavour would be futile anyway (Arendt, 2018, p.382). In other words, unleashing necessity and violence into the political sphere can bring catastrophic consequences to political power and freedom without actually any hope of solution, since the purpose of the political is to generate power not merely through any act but action in concert with others. This outset requires a network of power relations and not necessarily a violent clash within such network. For example, in the beginning of the French revolution the struggle aimed at liberation from the old regime, therefore natural solidarity emerged between leaders and the people in a shared project. The effort for liberation against material need, however, needed the production of artificial solidarity and instead of a plurality of voices it represented the Rousseauian general will (Fine, 2005, p.124). For Arendt this has social rather than political connotations as, instead of a plurality of opinions, the general will would mostly represent narrowly framed interests. Again, Arendt's primary focus is neither clash of interests nor consensus when it comes to political action, because her politics are not concerned with decision making in the administrative sense but with agonistic politics which can maintain the vitality of speech and action.

Despite drawing a sharp distinction between violence and power, and considering instrumental violence antipolitical, Arendt was not a pacifist and admitted there were times when violence can be justified for political purposes. Perhaps it is wiser to understand such an ambiguous position not through a means/ends schema but through the concept of limitations, which is more familiar to Arendtian thought. Arendt (1990, p.19) claims that a theory of revolution engages with the justification of violence only because it constitutes its political limitation; if, instead, it arrives at a glorification or justification of violence as such, it is no longer political

but antipolitical. In other words, instead of placing violent struggle out of the question, Arendt criticises the justification of violence as something with intrinsic value in the process of liberation (Correm, 2019). It is important to emphasise Arendt's insistence on not equating instruments with authentic political values. The distinction between power and violence can further suggest that the revolutionary spirit must be distinguished from revolutionary violence (Bernstein, 2013). If violence has no intrinsic value of itself but is merely a tool, then the context of political action will determine whether violence can be justified; still violence will always have a more marginal rather than central role.

Tchir (2017, p.49) locates in Arendt's work what he calls a "complex relationship" between the revolutionary action at the stage of liberation accompanied by violence, the non-violent revolutionary action that founds a new political space, and the political action emerging in this space which can give rise to dissent and contestation of the political and legal order. This is a useful approach to Arendtian political action which can shed light on her complex understanding of violence. Accordingly, these types of political action can be seen as the prerequisite for the construction of the political sphere, the foundational moment of the political sphere, and the impact of freedom in the political sphere. All of these forms of action produce political power but not all of them are exposed to violence. Arendt warns that it is not uncommon to find power and violence manifesting themselves simultaneously, however, it is less common to find any of the two in their pure, extreme forms (Arendt, 1990, p.46). Therefore, in the first stage of liberation the revolutionaries have the power of acting in concert, but this power is incomplete without an established political space to safeguard it. At the same time, violence is employed as a means to terminate domination so that the space is open for the construction of the public sphere. Arendt (2018) comments that in their initial stage revolutions appear to succeed with amazing ease because those who claim to seize power in fact face is the

power vacuum of the falling regime alongside the brutal force of violence. This power vacuum needs to be filled with political action and the initiation of such action comes with the foundation act, a constitution of liberty, which makes violence redundant and clears the political space of it.

Therefore, the second type of political action that aims to establish a political foundation is the most crucial stage of revolution. However, in this crucial stage, the force of the liberating rupture becomes confused with violence which tends to root itself in the idea of the foundation. Arendt (2018, p.373) explains that:

> The complexity comes when revolution is concerned with both liberation and freedom, and, since liberation is indeed a condition of freedom—though freedom is by no means a necessary result of liberation—it is difficult to see and say where the desire for liberation, to be free from oppression ends, and the desire for freedom, to live a political life, begins.

It is in this transitional moment when revolutionary fierceness can smuggle violence into the political and, since the violence of liberation is no longer necessary, it becomes abstract and attaches itself ontologically onto the political foundation. Arendt traces the perplexity of foundation and rupture back to Machiavelli and the insistence in our thought to depend a new beginning upon some sort of violation as in 'the violence of the beginning of history' (Arendt 1990, p.38). Associated with this thought is the need for a higher force which, upon the establishment, imposes the law that rules this creation. In the case of Machiavelli for example 'his insistence on the role of violence in politics was due not so much to his so-called realistic insight into human nature as to his futile hope that he could find some quality in certain men to match the qualities we associate with the divine' (ibid, p.39). For Machiavelli, the sovereign state came to fill this role, and this links back to the previous discussion of Arendt's critique of sovereign power and the idea that violence is not ontologically necessary to politics.

Away from a Hobbesian understanding of law as a contract inseparable from sovereign power, Arendt wants to uncover a source of legitimacy of political power which is consistent with public freedom and finds it in the notion of the promise. Arendt understands the law as a regulator of different domains of power, therefore, expects law to emerge out of a covenant that implies recognition and plurality instead of an act of consent that implies submission of power to and recognition of the sovereign (Birmingham, 2016, p. 56). In a sense, the people are not meant to consent to the power of the state for protection but instead remain empowered themselves and commit to a promise to protect the political, which far from an abstract notion of the state, it is the outcome of their collective action. Arendt wishes to move away from the establishment of the beginning through individual consent to some divine authority and focus on the act of mutual promise that individuals enact in the presence of one another. This is important for Arendt because promise is the political element which is closest to the source of political power. The legitimacy of this power is tied, as already explained, to the natality inherent in the human condition in the form of a beginning. For Arendt the body politic that will pass –through consent to a contract– all power to the government is doomed to leave the governed politically impotent. Opposite to this, power should formulate a mutual contract based on a shared promise:

> Hence, binding and promising, combining and covenanting are the means by which power is kept in existence; where and when men succeed in keeping intact the power which sprang up between them during the course of any particular act or deed, they are already in the process of foundation, of constituting a stable worldly structure to house, as it were, the combined power of action. There is an element of the world building capacity of man in the human faculty of making and keeping promises (Arendt, 1990, p.175).

This makes promise, but also forgiveness, two crucial elements of the political due to acknowledging the unpredictability of action. In order for action to allow for change and new beginnings, therefore being compatible with the human condition of natality, it needs to be unpredictable and initiated without a guarantee of fixed consequences. Political action can have

either merit or catastrophic consequences, which cannot be undone, but this should not lead us to renounce it, as this would imply renouncing politics and the human condition. In a sense, as it will be shown next, this is for Arendt the main function of totalitarianism. Before ending up to a discussion of totalitarianism as the extreme form of violence, it is useful to discuss the concepts of promise and forgiveness as the suggested political remedies according to Arendt. Her suggestion reveals that, in order to avoid totalitarianism and the destruction of the political sphere, it is necessary to protect unpredictable action and the potential inherent in natality, which is exactly what violence negates.

In her theorisation of action Arendt tries to confront the issues of unpredictability and irreversibility (Arendt, 1998). Promises are necessary because action has unpredictable consequences. This is both because action occurs in plurality among a power network of actors, but also as part of the human condition, which Arendt describes as 'the basic unreliability of men who never can guarantee today who they will be tomorrow' (Arendt, 1998, p. 244). This assumption should be read not as a claim on fixed human nature but as a commitment to the potential of the subject to change and evolve. Promise is presented here as "islands of predictability" so that some light is shed towards future uncertainty. To try and fixate uncertainty by covering 'the whole ground of the future and to map out a path secured in all directions' defeats the purpose of action and robs subjects of their potential (ibid). The functional role of the promise is therefore to become the force that keeps people together in action once the action of liberation has been completed. Promise becomes a consciously agreed purpose which can bind together people into actual popular sovereignty instead of relying on 'an identical will which somehow magically inspires them all' (ibid, p.245). This represents for Arendt an alternative establishment of a political foundation in place of abstracting power to the sphere of an isolated single entity, usually in the form of a nation.

The problem that arises with promise as political foundation is that promise is itself a form of action therefore bearing the character of fragility. Arendt has problematised extensively the fact that promises alone are not enough to produce a political space of lasting freedom (Kalyvas, 2009, p.240). A promise is simply an agreement to maintain political action and freedom; the fragility of such founding action still needs an element of durability to offer some continuity of the political realm, otherwise the only thing that a promise can guarantee is itself. The element of durability in the human condition is associated with the sphere of work and the human artefact, and this is exactly the role of the American constitution as a tangible form of law that bears more authority compared to promise. In other words, the political promise is transformed into authority, its legitimacy being derived from the natality of action itself and its durability provided by fabrication of its composers.

What the constitution does is practically laying down the law of action, which gives rise to the problem of violating and restricting the very purpose of freedom and openness (Kennan, 1994, p.315). Does this contradict the principle of the non-violent character of the political? As discussed earlier, Arendt has not claimed that violence never appears in the political. Her argument is that violence is not ontologically part of the political and once it appears it operates against political power and freedom because it negates the potential for action. Nevertheless, the necessary political qualities of plurality and openness that Arendt defends necessarily involve the danger of violence and restriction of freedom (Keenan, 1994, p.319). Since political action can bring both desirable and undesirable results, political promise simply reminds us of the incomplete character of action and the need to regenerate power.

Forgiveness recognises this and respects the character of action, otherwise nihilism and negation can more easily creep into the political. Forgiving is another form of political action, but it is also the condition for the possibility of continued coexistence (Kampowski, 2008). Forgiveness allows actors to maintain their togetherness when the unpredictability of action assaults it; however, it also requires togetherness. For Arendt (1998, p.237) both promise and forgiveness depend on plurality and cannot become part of a shared world-reality when enacted in isolation, because no one can forgive himself and no one can feel bound by a promise made only to himself. Even more than plurality, however, forgiveness secures the openness of action. Without the possibility to be released from the consequences of our actions, our capacity to act would be restricted to one single deed from which we could never recover (ibid). The actor needs to be able to begin anew and not be confined in the impasse of a single action however, this does not mean that forgiveness paradoxically erases action in an effort to enable it. Forgiveness is about looking–and not overlooking–at offensive action and about forgiving not just the action itself but most importantly the actor (Allers, 2010).

Forgiveness presents a solution to the irreversibility of action but, as a form of action, it is also unpredictable itself. Its unpredictability lies in the fact that it avoids the reflexive and commonly expected reaction of revenge and retribution, in other words it bypasses the violence of vengeance (Hirsch, 2012). This is crucial in revealing how forgiveness can be a possible alternative action to violent action. Arendt insists on the inherent novelty of action and suggests protecting human agency and potential, even if this means to accept unpredictability. Therefore, it is important that action signifies for the actor a new beginning which reveals oneself in distinction of other actions that might be offensive. Instead of restricting and reducing one's actions to a mere response, forgiveness allows the agent to move forward and generate unique action, therefore maintaining plurality. By conceiving forgiveness as the only

reaction that does not merely respond to violence but acts anew, Arendt elevates forgiveness to the status of a pure event (Pagani, 2016). For these reasons, Arendt's suggestions to promise and forgive should not be read as a wish for moral or utopian politics. Being aware of the ever-present danger violence poses to the political, Arendt offers a solution which remains pragmatic but is still radical enough to uphold a claim for non-violent politics.

Finally, and following from the political action of liberation and the political action of establishing the public sphere, Arendt recognises political action that can bring dissent and confrontation within a political community. Arendt differentiates between "conscientious objectors" and "civil disobedients" and she recognises civil disobedience as a political act of a group which is bound together by common opinion, as opposed to the unpolitical element of one's consciousness (Arendt, 1990, p.60) The justification of this position is that moral considerations are purely subjective, and this form of dissent can be cyclically framed as "consciousness against consciousness" instructing to avoid certain actions instead of inspiring action (ibid, p.62). Contrary to this, civil disobedience is based on shared action therefore involves the production of political power; even when the group stands against a majority this simply reconfirms the agonistic character of the political. Interestingly, and against the conservative view that delegitimises those who challenge political order, Arendt refuses to associate them with "common lawbreakers" and reduce their action to criminal behaviour. As expected, Arendt's justification is again the political criterion, according to which the civil disobedient does not stand against the law to create an exception for oneself but acts in the name of a group (ibid, p.76) tying once again her argument to the plurality of action.

On the issue of violent confrontation Arendt claims that civil disobedience is not violent as opposed to rebellion (ibid, p.77). This, again, does not signify an effort to condemn all violent

confrontation –although it does not praise it either. Arendt wishes to distinguish civil disobedience from revolution and in her own words, 'the civil disobedient accepts while the revolutionary rejects the frame of established authority' (ibid). Nevertheless, Arendt admits that this is a distinction hard to sustain since both acts aim at change which is anyway an inherent aspect of the human condition. The solution she suggests is how radical the change is or in her own terms 'the velocity of change' varies (ibid, p.78). A safe conclusion deriving from reading her work would suggest then a differentiation between a radical eruption, the violent break that revolution entails, and a more contained change which does not need to wipe out the past to establish something wholly new. It has already been discussed, how Arendt understands the violence of liberation struggles as necessary but pre-political, since the purpose of revolution is freedom which entails the establishment of the political sphere and disengagement from violence. Once the political foundation has been established, and political action does not aim to radically change it through rebellion and revolution, then action needs to be non-violent and respect plurality and freedom in order not to maintain the public sphere intact.

This distinction has not become clear enough in the literature. Gines (2013) argues that Arendt criticises Sartre's glorification of anti-colonial violence because it is specifically revolutionary violence that she rejects. Of course, Arendt recognises the use of violence in politics as in instrument but warns against its use emphasizing its destructiveness of political power in all occasions. This misinterpretation of Arendt can be explained by differening ontological approaches, since Gines states that 'there would not be a political community in the absence of violence, or at least the threat of violence' (ibid, p. 125). As it has been explained, Arendt holds the exact opposite position by making power and violence irreconciled. Depending on whether political action is revolutionary or agonistic in terms of its purpose, Arendt accepts or denies

the use of violent instruments respectively. Overall, as long as the goal is to preserve the political sphere intact, in cases where domination has not completely destroyed freedom and plurality, then plural action can take the form of agonistic power relations instead of violent liberation. This approach can adapt Arendt's theory to anti-colonial violent struggle, while in all cases, being merely an instrument, violence is not meant to be glorified and become confused with empowerment.

Totalitarianism as an extreme form of violence and negation of potential

This final part of the analysis aims to discuss Arendt's view of totalitarianism as the purest form of extreme violence. As explained, violence is always destructive for power and freedom, unless the political sphere is already taken over by domination and a struggle for liberation attempts to construct a new public space by means of liberationist violence, which therefore for Arendt appears to be pre-political. Within an existing political sphere, action takes place generating political power and, due to action being plural, power is thus generated as a complex network of power relations. Since action is linked to natality, its results are novel and unpredictable, allowing the political sphere to change and maintain a fluid, non-fixed character. This means that action and the power relations it produces can have an agonistic character, consistent with the principle of plurality; however, this agonistic character is necessarily non-violent. Once violence intrudes into the political sphere, it blocks freedom of action, destroys plurality and consequently power. According to this, totalitarianism seems to be for Arendt the historical case of an unprecedented phenomenon of a form of violence so extreme that all power is destroyed, and the political space is non-existent. I suggest this reading because it enables one to make sense of Arendt's views on the relation between power and violence. My key claim here is that violence functions as a negation of human potential for action, which is why Arendt sees extreme totalitarian violence as the absolute negation of all power and politics.

To begin with, a recapitulation of Arendt's key ideas on violence and power with emphasis on their interaction will help introduce the ideas of terror and extreme totalitarian violence. Power is traditionally understood as rule and domination in terms of a command and obedience relationship, and this is why it is common to confuse power with violence. Concepts such as power, strength, force, authority and violence need to be carefully defined and distinguished. For Arendt (1972, p.143) 'power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert [it] is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together'. Arendt recognises that we can locate power also in political institutions but such institutions merely manifest and materialise the power of those who support and lend their power to them. Once this support withers then institutions also wither and "petrify". This implies that an institution can still affect the political sphere, but once it becomes rigid and seizes to represent the legitimate power of the people, it turns into a mere political instrument; it is not action-driven politics *par excellence*, as Arendt would define it. In other words, we can still talk about the state and the government in the context of politics, but not in accordance with Arendt's ontological assumptions of the political sphere.

Arendt claims that one of the reasons behind the confusion around power and violence is the operation of the government, which appears to be in possession of violent instruments in order to maintain its power according to a Weberian logic of state power. Kautzer (2019) argues that Arendt conceals and insulates the violence of the state in her work and only rarely refers to state violence as a measure of 'last resort', treating it instead as an inherent characteristic of the repressive character of the state. Accordingly, Kautzer's claim that the impact of state violence on racial formation remains under-theorised in Arendt's work seems to have some basis (ibid). However, Arendt's work, especially on totalitarianism but also on revolution, takes a very close and critical look at the idea of sovereignty and totalitarian state repression.

Considering the earlier discussion on Arendt's views on the sovereign state, it is an overstatement to claim that Arendt has consciously attempted to conceal state domination. Rather it is safer to argue that Arendt's focus was a theory of politics and power and the ontological separation between power and violence. Approaching politics and power with the concept of the state at heart would go against Arendt's ontological assumptions as earlier sections have revealed. Furthermore, Arendt's position towards resistance to violence is very strict; she claims that very often the majority refuses to mobilise and take over power in an agonistic manner as 'no one is willing to raise more than a voting finger for the status quo' (Arendt, 1972, p.141). Every attempt to preserve power through violence is futile when people mobilise themselves politically in action and for Arendt revolutions are a proof of that (ibid, p.146). Since state capacity for violence is significantly larger than those who oppose it, the revolutionary groups are not irrational to contest the state; resistance is possible because some people understand the power generated by their political action. Moving beyond a praise of heroism and morale, resistance has proven historically fruitful because it represents plural action against instrumental violence and bureaucratic structures.

The prominent difference between power and violence in Arendt's work is that as opposed to politics and power, which represent a distinct sphere and an aspect of the human condition, violence is merely an instrument. Arendt's objection of the conflation of the two concepts is then that violence is placed ontologically at the same level as politics, action and power. Her position is not simply a Manichean one, seeing power and violence as two opposite concepts, because violence in her work does not hold the same status as power. When Arendt in her essay on Violence criticises Sartre and Fanon on their position on violence, many read her as unfavourable towards anti-colonial struggle. A closer reading, however, can reveal that she criticises the widely held belief that violence is necessarily part of the political. This can be

seen, for example, when she explains that ‘for Fanon’s revolutionaries only violence pays’ (1972, p.116). In the same passage she also laments that the current political experience has taken violence for granted in a nihilistic attitude. Furthermore, regarding Sartre’s commentary on Fanon’s “Wretched of the Earth”, she puts forward the objection that ‘revenge cannot be the answer’ (ibid, p.122) and to Sartre’s morale-boosting slogan ‘natives of all underdeveloped countries unite’ she simply responds that the ‘third world is not a reality but an ideology’ (ibid, p.123). It is noticeable here that her criticism does not target neither the possibility of the use of violence nor the ‘natives’ who are meant to employ it but rests on two objections.

The first objection has to do with the absence of a conscious focus on freedom as the end of action; instead instrumental violence is glorified. Her second objection is on the abstract concept of underdeveloped natives instead of a political community which aims to establish its own public sphere of action. This is probably why she claims that ‘Fanon stays closer to reality than most’ (ibid, p. 122) implying that Fanon was actually concerned with the goal of freedom and the foundation of an independent political community as opposed to those who praised liberational violence for its own sake. For Arendt the main danger in overemphasizing violent action is that its end-means rationale can easily reduce the end to the means which it justifies (ibid. p.106). The only end of political action is freedom and politics itself, and to introduce instrumental reasoning for particular political considerations is futile, since unpredictability of human action makes every predetermination unreliable.

Arendt’s comments on Fanon imply that he is not necessarily among those who glorify violence; instead she reads his work as falling into the same trap of conflating power and violence. For example, she suggests that the “creative madness” of anti-colonial struggle should be interpreted as power and not violence (ibid, p.172) and she locates the root of this

misunderstanding in that Fanon presents the vitality of the struggle for liberation as a process tied to life on the one hand and violence to the other (ibid. p.166). For Arendt, creativity and vitality are characteristics of power, not violence. As discussed already, her work points out the danger in interpreting power and violence in biological terms. Instead, she has put forward the notion of natality as a political concept that represents human potential for beginning anew, through action, which is where all creativity, vitality and power lie.

Interestingly, Arendt claims that even though we use the term force interchangeably to violence, we should reserve it as a more specific type of coercive means, as a form of "energy" released by physical or social movements, or as the force of circumstances (Arendt, 1972, p.44). This leaves room for interpreting natality, human potential, as a form of rupture, a breaking point where circumstances are forced to change in an unstoppable and unpredictable manner, as Arendtian action suggests. This should be read separately to the concept of violence, as later Arendt suggests: 'Violence is not the only 'event' of interruption; it is the function, however, of all action, as distinguished from mere behaviour, to interrupt what otherwise would have proceeded automatically and therefore predictably (ibid, p.132). Therefore, as discussed earlier in the context of revolutionary action, the pre-political violence of liberation is not to be confused with the power of revolutionary action and definitely not with employing violent means within the political sphere for the purpose of domination.

Power in Arendtian terms is not to be understood in a vertical, hierarchical manner, signifying control and domination; instead it is a horizontal concept (Bernstein, 2013, p.152). This also bears spatial connotations which link to the political sphere as the milieu of action. This space is characterised by the vitality that plurality brings to politics, therefore, power and the public sphere can be conceptualised as a network of power relations. Many scholars have interpreted

Arendt's work along these lines and suggest that her conceptualisation of power can be read as "power with", which resonates with her emphasis on the 'togetherness' of political action. Penta (1996) for example, states that the Arendtian link between action and speech can produce power which is localizable in the public space in the form of a horizontal level of conversation. This idea of politics as a communication of 'arguments' allows for an agonistic, yet non-violent action, and since meaning is commonly constructed in a shared space then the political can maintain its fluidity and eschew domination. Gregoratto (2018) discusses this aspect of "power with" nicely in her work on agonist love. She understands "power with" as a proper form of power relations that combines "power to" and "power over" on the basis of communal power. Agonist love in terms of power relations is a reciprocal process of empowerment here, under the condition that each pole of power remains autonomous and does not become homogenous. This approach allows us to think of power as a condition of simultaneous dependence and interdependence, contrary to the usual understanding of interdependence as a necessary evil which challenges one's power.

Therefore, Arendt's work on power and violence is rich in concepts that can help us reconsider the functions of the political sphere and understand how violence functions politically, allowing for change and an ontological uncoupling of the two concepts. Arendt's understanding of power as positive and non-restrictive by definition provides us with enormous critical potential to examine whether any given constellation of power has been formed on the basis of subjects acting together, and whether such an arrangement leaves this option open for future action (Volk, 2016). Arendt's work can be complicated and appear too normative, while her strict categorisation of concepts sounds arbitrary and exaggerated for a thinker portrayed here as radical and advocate of openness in politics. Bernstein (2011) recognises that Ardent is neither naïve nor utopian but purposefully exaggerates her claims to emphasise her point that

power and action are distorted when we fuse them with violence. Once her work as a response to totalitarian terror and a project that aims to remedy violence in politics, this becomes clearer. For this reason, Arendt's theory of totalitarianism must be linked to both her political ontology analysed in the beginning of the chapter and her theory of violence read as a negation of natality and human agency.

This link lies in the view that totalitarianism is the most extreme form of violence, which once it has completely destroyed action and political power, replaces the political sphere with a reign of terror. Arendt's problematisation is how to prevent this destruction of the political sphere; however, her concern is not limited to totalitarian violence. Given her approach of how violence functions, it becomes necessary to completely uncouple violence from politics, as there seems to be no such thing as a safe amount of minimum violence. This uncoupling can be read either as a conservative and defensive choice, springing from the traumatic experience of totalitarianism, or as a set of theoretical principles that aim to positively uphold the status of the political. For example, McGowan (1997, p.268) discusses the difference between violence and terror as one between an instrument that overcomes obstacles and a pre-emptive strike against stability respectively. He argues that for Arendt natality and plurality need a political space characterised by stability, which is exactly what totalitarianism prevents. According to this reading, Arendt seeks to promote a utopian political sphere of non-violence and stability, free from necessity, in order to provide a remedy for totalitarian terror.

However, this analysis suggests a different reading of her work. Arendt would not probably agree to her theorisation of the political being framed as a utopian project; rather she attempts to offer an ontological understanding of it. In her work there is a genuine certainty that the political *is* plural and non-violent. Furthermore, as explained already, her idea of natality and

creation suggest a space that on the one hand secures plurality but on the other hand its foundation does not become too rigid to allow change. Even though Arendt can be read as a conservative mind who wishes to maintain stability and order, she could be more aptly described as a radical thinker who aims at safeguarding the political sphere in conditions of fluidity and movement. Her faith in the power of natality and plurality, expressed through action, guarantees that such fluidity shall not be politically destabilizing but actually productive.

Totalitarianism is for Arendt the opposite of these conditions. The totalitarian characteristics that will be emphasised here in this context are the massification of individuals as opposed to plurality and distinction; the emptiness of meaning and subsequent loss of a shared reality as opposed to the construction of the common world through speech and action; and the principle of organisation in totalitarianism as opposed to fluidity and change. By turning society into an "atomised mass" without a sense of identity, totalitarianism led to isolation and therefore powerlessness. Without the possibility to come together for action and production of shared meaning and reality, the common world was lost as the political space shrank. In this context, totalitarianism as a regime of perfectly organised terror became the most radical denial of freedom and an absolute negation of all action and potential. It is crucial to briefly expose here Arendt's purpose of her search for the *origins* of totalitarianism, as opposed to the *nature* of totalitarianism. Arendt claims that her interest is to ponder on the questions that arose after the experience of totalitarianism: 'What happened? Why did it happen? How could it have happened?' (Arendt, 1973, p.xxiv). Arendt warns that such an endeavour should not try to offer consolation or a sense of security from the phenomenon of totalitarianism. Therefore, she clearly explains that:

> Comprehension does not mean denying the outrageous, deducing the unprecedented from precedents, or explaining phenomena by such analogies and generalities that the impact of reality and the shock of experience are no longer felt. It means rather, examining and bearing consciously the burden that events have placed upon us–neither denying their existence nor submitting meekly to their weight as though everything that in fact happened could not have happened otherwise (ibid, xiv).

We read in this passage the intention to avoid causal claims that might obscure the peculiarity of the particular experience of totalitarianism. Arendt's study of totalitarianism is consistent with her objections to causality which are epistemological and political and have to do with determinism and the denial of free will, in that things could not be otherwise to what the necessity of the causal nexus suggests (Kang, 2013). In looking for the origins of totalitarianism Arendt refuses to treat past circumstances as unavoidable, also because this logic helps us explain but not understand the phenomena themselves. In a sense, Arendt tried to look at the beginning and not the causes of totalitarianism. Knowing how crucial the idea of beginning is in her work, the unprecedented character of totalitarianism in Arendt's thought is revealed as the tragic paradox in which totalitarianism is itself a phenomenon initiated by human action, which however attacks human natality and the freedom to engage in new beginnings. Investigating the origins of totalitarianism implies an understanding of the beginning of something that threatens beginnings itself. This idea resonates with the unpredictable character of action in Arendt's thought.

This understanding calls for a study of totalitarianism placed between the two extremes of locking the phenomenon into its specific historical manifestation and of neutralizing it as something common in political life. Enzo Traverso (2017) for example, calls for a careful and critical use of the term totalitarianism, given the multiple differences in the targets of violence, the desired relationship between state and society, and different ideological underpinnings between Nazism and Stalinism. Instead of locking our reading to the binary of Nazism and

Stalinism or trying to apply the analysis of totalitarianism to all cases of extremely violent regimes, it is useful to read Arendt's work on totalitarianism as a set of conditions which can *potentially* unleash extreme violence to the extent that the political sphere shrinks and perishes. Totalitarianism went through different transformations depending on the conditions it met in each country therefore it makes more sense to provide an anatomy of different stages rather than an essentialist definition of the phenomenon (Redner, 2017, p. 25). To paraphrase Arendt's question, how can certain political circumstances lead to the destruction of the political sphere? What is the main function of extreme totalitarian violence? Antisemitism, imperialism and racism are the main phenomena that come to Arendt's attention. Since totalitarianism as a historical paradigm cannot be reproduced in identical conditions, looking for origins instead of causes seems to be more fruitful in understanding instead of merely explaining the phenomenon and make use of this understanding in a wider context of understanding violence.

Indeed, many thinkers have used Arendt's theory of totalitarianism to make sense of modern politics. Lee (2011) for example has tried to locate Arendt's place in postcolonial thought, alongside Fanon's and Said's work and in the context of her study of European imperialism and racism but also of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and refugee rights. The fact that Arendt has not reduced Imperialism solely to economic incentives and that she insisted upon the necessity of one to belong to a political community, as opposed to the condition of statelessness, confirms efforts to find in her work relevance to post-colonial thought. Arendt's "boomerang thesis" also puts forward a link between European totalitarianism and overseas colonialism to claim that genocide and colonialism are also inherently linked against the plurality of humanity which Arendt wishes to secure and promote (Stone, 2011). Furthermore, the concept of "superfluousness" and the category of the rootless refugee, deprived of rights

and status, is also relevant for contemporary thinkers and most evidently in the work of Giorgio Agamben on sovereignty, law and human rights (Baum, Bygrave and Morton, 2011). Therefore, totalitarianism is not to be approached here as a specific type of political regime but instead a constellation of phenomena which are familiar to political thought but can potentially take an unexpected turn and jeopardise political freedom. Arendt herself, instead of referring to a political system of a deliberately structured kind, saw totalitarianism as a chaotic, nonutilitarian, manically dynamic movement of destruction that assails all the features of human nature and the human world that make politics possible (Canovan, 2000). Totalitarianism, therefore, aims at transforming not just the external world or society but the very nature of human beings.

The first function of totalitarianism examined here is the eradication of the human condition of plurality from the public sphere. Totalitarianism aims for sameness, against every sense of plurality (Arendt, 1973, p.266). Totalitarian movements still rely on numbers similarly to political power; the difference is that political power rests on numbers in terms of plurality, while totalitarianism needs the sheer force of the masses. Arendt perceives the breakdown of the class system as a main cause of massification and the rise of totalitarianism. Class-based politics had already paved the way for less politically active citizens because of its limited group obligations and fixed attitudes towards the government, instead of a sense of personal responsibility for political rule (ibid, p.314). Modern life and the triumph of the private over the public have given rise to alienation and a loss of worldliness. People believed that their action had no real meaning or consequences so the only solution to their refuted action is joining a movement, becoming part of its mass and follow its ideology.

Crucially, Arendt points out the failure of the state to keep together a coherent body politic and prevent its disintegration into diverse social groups. Failure of continental European states to guarantee the rule of law for all, not only discredited the legitimacy of the state but further led to the emergence of the alienated masses (Tsao, 2004). In this context, the bitterness of the perceived injustice did not bring people together under a shared goal. Instead, the psychology of this new mass formation was characterised by loss of interest in each other's well-being and a generalised anxiety that leads people to struggle for their individual wants and needs. Arendt (1973, p.315) describes the outcome as the birth of a "negative solidarity" within "a structureless mass of furious individuals", who had in common only the understanding that the existing political system is fraudulent and hopeless.

Nationalism attempted to respond to the vacuum class politics left by providing a substitute of wider national interest to narrower class interests; however, this only meant that rights were still not granted equally but only on the basis of group belonging. Citizenship in totalitarianism could only be expressed through an obscured and mythic national character, which excludes the Other as an alien figure (LaFay, 2014, p.89). Group belonging instead of revealing oneself to others became important for the alienated and superfluous individuals. Arendt explains that total loyalty, the psychological basis for total domination, can be expected only from a completely isolated individual who has no other social ties and therefore derives a sense of belonging to the world only from belonging to the movement (Arendt, 1973, p.323).

It is important to note that violence was already present in these political conditions. On the one hand, the social sphere had started taking over political space. Arendt (2018, p.382) explains that while 'violence pitted against violence leads to war, violence pitted against social conditions has always led to terror'. Social problems and economic crisis dominated political

discourse and brought necessity and concerns related to survival into the political sphere. On the other hand, during attempts for revolutionary change, violence was the key means used to overcome obstacles and bring uniformity and solidarity. This is because action was primarily concerning liberation. Once such obstacles had been overcome, the creation of fictional obstacles and enemies was necessary to maintain the unity found in violence. After the struggle for liberation, instead of allowing society to settle into freedom and plurality, terror was used to pre-empt such settlement of the political space. This is expressed as the intention of a "permanent revolution" (Arendt, 1973, p.389). Any kind of foundation would kill the impetus of the totalitarian movement, which had to maintain its ongoing motion.

Totalitarian domination does not merely rest on a violent apparatus but on constant motion, in the sense that it never seizes to dominate every single aspect of every individual's life (ibid, p.216). While violence is just a means to an end, in the case of totalitarianism terror is an end itself and it remains in movement instead of establishing itself. This is why Arendt differentiates between totalitarian domination and authoritarianism, since the latter only uses violence as an instrument to destroy the power of its enemies and solidify itself into a permanent regime. Contrary to this, totalitarianism destroys all power, targeting friends and enemies alike. Arendt (ibid, p.54) explains that 'terror is not the same as violence; it is, rather, the form of government that comes into being when violence, having destroyed all power, does not abdicate but, on the contrary, remains in full control'.

These are the conditions that gave rise to totalitarian terror, an absolute form of violence, which had a crucial effect on human beings as actors. With the eradication of all plurality and power, the subject undergoes a violent transformation. The capacity of thought and experience is destroyed so that both the Self and the world have been lost (ibid. p.477). Isolation means that

the space to come together and engage in action has vanished, therefore, there is no way for power to be generated. This loss of the world, the loss of political space, is the totalitarian project to destroy human capacity for the unexpected (Janover, 2011). Consequently, for Arendt, life loses all value in political terms, that is as *bios*. While existence in terms of biology is not destroyed, the *psyche* is, so that people are turned into bare bodies 'stuck between life and death' (ibid, p.445). This explains Arendt's approach to human rights, which focuses on the superior "right to have rights". When we refer to the value of human life, we do not reduce it to biological existence. The right to have rights entails the right to belong to some kind of organised community and have a place within this political world to speak, act and reveal oneself; therefore, loss of speech and action and one's place in the world is a fundamental deprivation of one's most important human rights (Parekh, 2008). This signifies an existential need to enter the space of appearances, as discussed earlier, and it is for Arendt the only way one can be free and make sense of the link between the self and the world. Holman (2013) calls this a desire, an almost-instinctive urge that the human condition involves, indicating that biological existence is not treated as separate but rather as only a partial, half-fulfilled aspect of human existence. Therefore, a negation of the potential to act and reveal oneself can destroy all capacity for experience and subsequently meaning.

This brings us to the second function of totalitarianism, which entails the destruction of shared meaning and reality. Totalitarianism moves from violence to terror exactly to prevent human plurality from re-emerging. For this reason, humanity is to be organised as if it is all one individual, and following the diminishing of power, the channels of communication are replaced with 'a tight metal band that crushes individuals together, turning plurality into one gigantic Man' (ibid, p.465). As Arendt's political ontology suggests, meaning and social reality can only be created in the political space as an outcome of shared action. If reality can only be

approached through building together a plurality of approaches, totalitarianism must entail also a loss of reality and meaning of the world. Indeed, Castoriadis (1983) attributes to Arendt the realisation that with totalitarianism humanity faced the creation of "the meaningless". According to this thought, human beings bear the potential to create both meaning and the meaningless, both the sublime and the monstrous. Once political space has vanished, men cannot come together, and they cannot do so mostly because loss of power and plurality means that there are no channels of interaction. To restate this in a rhetorical question, in totalitarianism 'there was no truth, for who would be trusted to tell it?' (Redner, 2017, p.7). An important element that ties together this existential predicament and widespread loss is the concept of nihilism. This is a concept that will be further explored later in discussion of Albert Camus' work on violence; however, it is clear that for Arendt the absolute violence of totalitarianism goes hand in hand with nihilism and negation. David (2015) also argues that totalitarianism does not proceed from mere ignorance but instead from loss of meaning and purpose in a nihilistic society. In other words, the capacity for action and the end of it, which is politics itself, is sacrificed to the constant motion and purpose of totalitarianism, which is the exact opposite, i.e. destruction of all action and politics.

The destruction of plurality is tied to the need for ongoing movement because terror has the purpose to freeze men and turn them static in order to clear the way for the movement of nature or history (Arendt, 1994, p.342). This is central in totalitarian ideologies and explains why the loss of reality is insignificant. To begin with, Arendt believed that all ideologies contain totalitarian elements, but they usually do not coincide with a totalitarian movement to develop them fully (Arendt, 1973, p.470). The totalitarian elements of all ideologies are the claim to total explanation of the world, deducted from a narrow premise, and their scorn for experience which actually emancipates them from reality and subjects them to a logical procedure that

stems from an axiomatically accepted premise (ibid). Therefore, ideology is separate to political action, in that it is more interested in a gradual predictable process rather than the spontaneous moment. Arendt herself laments that 'ideologies are never interested in the miracle of being [they] are historical, concerned with becoming and perishing' (ibid, p.469). To rephrase, the emphasis is not on natality as human potential but on the cycle of human life and the progress of history. This explains why totalitarianism needs to prevent action; action is the real enemy of totalitarianism because it hinders the historical process from completing its predetermined course.

Totalitarianism attacks both the private and the public sphere mainly because it aspires to dominate through its ideology all discourses, so that everything outside it will become irrelevant and disappear. This takes a form of radical social engineering according to which society must be reconstructed artificially (Halberstam, 1998). The place of law in totalitarianism is consistent with such an artificial society and reveals the logic of halting action and accelerating the course of history. Totalitarianism appears lawless in terms of positive law but does not present itself as arbitrary as it strictly obeys the laws of history and nature that the underlying ideology suggests (Arendt, 1994, p.339). Law for Arendt serves as a commonly-agreed boundary of action within a political community, thus providing a sense of stability in conditions of unpredictability (ibid, p.341). Totalitarianism reverses that and suspends action, making the human factor predictable and lifeless in order to allow for an unhindered motion of the processes of history and nature. In this case, law as a boundary to action becomes redundant.

Without a framework of rules of action–and no action– the meaning of guilt also vanishes. Totalitarianism rests on a grey area of people who are both victims and victimisers, where collective guilt applies to both victims and executioners, hence weakening the connection

between people and making public self-disclosure impossible (Tumarkin, 2011). Nobody can remain safe in totalitarian conditions by following an 'acceptable' way of action, because all action is undesirable. This threat to action is even more concealed in mass societies where people are not inclined to act anyway and instead prefer the security of passively following the premises of an ideology. In a sense, the mass provides its anti-political support to the movement through inaction, in the opposite way that people would combine their power through common action to support a political community. Masses desire to escape reality, not being able to bear unpredictability, so that they need the 'constant transformation of chaotic and accidental conditions into a man-made pattern of relative consistency' (Arendt, 1973, p.352). Totalitarianism then is not an external phenomenon that dominates men through violence, but instead it creeps into the political as violence paired with political inactivity to finally establish itself as terror.

This links to the last function of totalitarianism examined here, which is organisation of the masses with the purpose to negate all potential. Arendt presents organisation as a precondition for the rise of totalitarianism. Totalitarian movements are possible wherever masses gain appetite for political organisation (Arendt, 1973, p.311). Those masses are not held together by a consciousness of common interest, therefore lack specific political goals and are characterised by political indifference. The masses do not wish to hold any political power but to maintain faith in the fictional world of the ideology; therefore, power in totalitarianism lies exclusively in the force produced through organisation (ibid, p.417). While taking power in an authoritarian regime means the state has to be reshaped to reflect the interests of those under its structure, totalitarianism makes the entire state apparatus subordinate to it, until it comes to reflect the movement. Taking over the state is not the end but merely the means to keep the 'movement' going and preventing external reality from destroying the ideology of the

movement (Tormey, 1995, p.48). The principle of organisation is one of inclusion and exclusion, while those included feel privileged instead of condemned, since the force of totalitarianism makes clear that life outside it is unconceivable. For this reason, Arendt's emphasis is placed on the partially consensual abandonment of potential:

> From the viewpoint of an organisation which functions according to the principle that whoever is not included is excluded, whoever is not with me is against me, the world at large loses all the nuance, differentiations, and pluralistic aspects which had in any event become confusing and unbearable to the masses who had lost their place and their orientation in it (Arendt, 1973, p.380).

Overall, contrary to political space, totalitarian space is a "flattened" space in which a repetition of images and symbols has the purpose to defeat uniqueness, so that spontaneity is evicted and a one-dimensional hyperreality is stablished (Ahmed, 2019, p.144). This is how totalitarianism seizes all power from the political space and dominates every aspect of individual life to ensure that all spontaneity, even in the most unpolitical and harmless forms of behaviour, is destroyed. Understanding this reading of totalitarianism brings some justice to Arendt's attempt to separate ontologically power from violence. In her famous reversal of Clausewitz that politics is the continuation of war by other means, Arendt indicates her awareness that the less commitment there is to political means, the more tempting resort to violence becomes (Young-Bruehl, 2009, p.52). Once violence sneaks into the political sphere and starts consuming power at the expense of political action and plurality, there is always the danger that domination will become complete and violence will turn into terror. Arendt does not deny that violence is often used as a political instrument but seems uncomfortable with the assumption that politics cannot be uncoupled from violence. Confusing power to violence can lead to nihilistic attitudes towards politics, hence creating an aversion towards the risk and unpredictability action entails. The subsequent effort to hinder political action and control beginnings endangers human potential and the very existence of the political space. It is under these circumstances that violence can be seen as a negation of human potential.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed Arendt's political theory, emphasizing the primacy of political action in her work. The source of all political action is the fact of human natality, which introduces to the world new actors with the potential to bring change and generate power together with their peers. This fact of human potential is an indispensable element to the pollical sphere because it allows for the creation of shared meaning and the construction of the human world. Arendt understands natality and human potential as a creative force and a rupture, which is necessarily characterised by instability and constant change. Efforts to reduce the political sphere to biological necessity, as well as efforts to control the unpredictable character of human action, carry the risk of violence. Violence can obstruct action and destroy the political sphere and the chapter has elaborated on this to show how and why violence functions as a negation of human potential. The example of totalitarianism has confirmed this function of nihilistic violence that wishes to curb human creativity, but such violence is not unique to totalitarian politics. The next chapter engages with nihilistic violence in the work of Albert Camus, whose work is also inspired by the totalitarian experience, but goes beyond it to explore violence in a wider existential form, as well as in the colonial context. Similar to Arendt, Camus also sees violence as negation of human potential and proposes the remedy of creative human action and rebellion against nihilistic violence.

Chapter 2: Solidarity in the face of absurdity: The Rebel against nihilistic violence

Camus's non-fictional, philosophical work is summarised in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Camus, 2005) and *The Rebel* (Camus, 2013b). In the former book Camus discusses suicide as it rests on the question of whether it makes sense to live or not. This question for Camus links with the feeling of absurdity which humans face in their attempt to locate meaning in their existence. In the latter work, *the Rebel*, Camus passes his focus from suicide to murder, searching for a legitimate justification of violence. Therefore, the two works can be seen as a continuous effort, beginning from the question of existential violence and suicide, moving on to the question of murderous violence, and concluding with Camus's prescription for human action towards absurdity. This summarises what we frequently refer to as his "philosophy of the absurd". In the opening of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus first warns the reader that the absurd in his work will not be treated as a conclusion–let's say of the human condition–but rather as a starting point. This is in part a methodological note, explaining that the writer intends to begin with pure description and holds no assumptions beyond the question of suicide – the 'one truly serious philosophic problem' (Camus, 2005, p.1). There is, however, an implicit suggestion one can read, and this is that Camus's goal is to go beyond the absurdity of human life and suggest what humans can make of it. The answer for Camus is rebellion but, as this analysis will explain, passing from Sisyphus to the Rebel the justification for rebellion shifts from absurdity to solidarity.

Camus's work is essentially an effort to recover a moral ground for politics beyond transcendent religion and positivist science (Illing, 2015). The argument here is that this moral

ground is humanity and its potential as it manifests through the rebel's action towards the absurd. Human beings face the absurd and find themselves between two options: nihilism and rebellion. While nihilism rejects all values and principles that build meaning and action, rebellion is the action that becomes meaningful in itself through experience and its potentially creative effects within the void of the world. I argue that what Camus calls rebellion is essentially human potential, the will to experience and act, which is what defines humanity. To negate potential through nihilism is for Camus incompatible with rebellion as it is the same as negating life and humanity. This explains why violence for Camus is never legitimate and why it functions as negation of human potential. In this way, this chapter not only enhances the central argument of the thesis with a second thinker who confirms it but does so in a manner that considers the effects of violence on the individual and not only on the political community, which has been the main focus of Arendt.

The chapter begins with a discussion of *The Myth of Sisyphus* where the concept of the absurd is introduced. The subject's inability to find absolute meaning in the world is a form of existential violence which manifests as negation and nihilism. I explain how in confrontation with absurdity Camus suggests not to surrender to nihilistic violence but recognise the lack of universal meaning as a fact of life, and rebel against it by creating new meaning. The second part of the analysis focuses on *The Rebel* and links individual to collective resistance through the concept of solidarity. The main concept discussed will be rebellion as a response to absurdity and nihilism. I read rebellion as synonymous with human potential, since it has both an affirmative and negative character. The analysis will then discuss the paradox of resorting to violence to respond to injustice. I argue that Camus does not aim at the resolution of contradictions but suggests perpetual resistance of an agonistic character without escaping moral responsibility. The final section places this in historical context by discussing Camus's

position on Algerian independence. Camus's suggestion that French and native Algerians should coexist in solidarity was controversial and framed him as an apologist for French colonialism. I explain how Camus's position deeply resonates with his philosophy of the absurd and how the tension within it simply confirms Camus's ideas on solidarity and rebellion. It will be shown that Camus's independent Algeria was a matter of human potential to him but lack of solidarity among different identities gave rise to a violence that negated such potential.

Sisyphus, absurdity and resistance

Sisyphus is Camus's absurd hero, condemned by the gods to ceaselessly roll a rock to the top of a mountain only to watch the stone fall back, so he begins his task anew. This futile action, his whole being revolving around struggling to accomplish nothing, was deemed to be the cruellest punishment for Sisyphus's scorn of the gods and passion for life. Camus claims that what makes Sisyphus's fate tragic is that he is conscious of it; however, this is what also makes him a hero because 'there is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn' (Camus, 2005, p.117). This is the rationale behind Camus's statement that one must imagine Sisyphus happy; Sisyphus is happy because his fate belongs to him. Accordingly, Sisyphus summarises Camus's understanding of life and how humans will ideally live such life in the best possible way. One becomes aware of the futility of everyday activities when there is no meaning and certainty other than death. Even though there is passion for life and nobody enjoys the idea of death, there seems to be no clear purpose of living other than dying; in other words, life seems as futile as a Sisyphean task. Since suicide emerges out of the consideration that life is not worth living, Camus wonders whether this necessarily follows from the inability to find meaning in life. In other words, very soon in The Sisyphus the real question emerges, and that is what we are meant to do after facing absurdity:

> Does that insult to existence, that flat denial in which it is plunged come from the fact that it has no meaning? Does its absurdity require one to escape it through hope or suicide – this is what must be clarified, hunted down and elucidated while brushing aside all the rest. Does the Absurd dictate death? (Camus, ibid, p.7).

The first step towards the answer is to locate and describe the absurd within human experience. Camus does not treat the absurd as a characteristic inherent to human condition; what is inherent in humans is thinking and the process of understanding. Nevertheless, for Camus 'to understand is to unify, therefore the human mind expresses a 'nostalgia for unity' and the 'desire for absolutes in our thought' (ibid, p.15). The human mind strives for familiarity and tries to reduce its experience of the world to its own categories. Here lies the great paradox of human existence because 'the mind that asserts total unity proves by its very assertion its own difference and the diversity it claimed to resolve' (ibid, p.16). The world remains "silent" and does not provide the answers that the human mind aspires to achieve but oppositely, the more one desires an answer the louder the silence of the world becomes. Camus (ibid, p.28) explains that the term absurd means that something is impossible but also contradictory because 'absurdity springs from comparison between a bare fact and a certain reality, between action and the world that transcends it'. It becomes clear then that a discussion of the absurd is essentially a discussion of difference which implies separation of thought from experience; however, this gap between the man and the world is paradoxically also what links them (Carrol, p.58). If this separation, the gap between humans and the world, is the effect of absurdity, then the absurd is essentially what creates difference.

The absurd creates difference yet it becomes problematic not at the level of our experience but in our reflection of it (Solomon, 2006, p.44). We can then rephrase this assumption to claim that it is our engagement with the absurd that creates difference, in the sense that difference is brought to one's attention. Absurdity itself does not exist in the world autonomously but is

generated by human confrontation with the irrationality of the world; it is what lies between humans and the world (Zaretsky, 2013, p.14). The absurd is not to be seen as transcendence as it only exists in a relation to the human mind. It rises between a human being and the world once the human mind cannot find a higher general meaning of existence outside itself; the absurd exists because for the human mind the universe lacks meaning. Camus (2005, p.20) indeed claims that 'the absurd depends as much on man as on the world' but this serves only to emphasise that the absurd actually *is* our link to the world. This does not deny that the absurd reveals itself in the human mind while the world remains silent and neutral. What does it mean then that the absurd is both a gap and the bridge of this gap between humans and the world? The absurd is what links us to the world but this link is based on difference; the "bridge" is an unusual one, but this does not necessarily mean it is not functional. Perhaps it is helpful to understand the absurd through the feeling of uncertainty in the human effort to find a proper place in the world.

Bowker (2012, p.64) encourages us to imagine absurdity as a way of being *in the world*, rather than a discovery or description *of the world*. The world remains silent and indifferent towards humans and its only role towards the absurd is to represent a lack of meaning. But for humans, as Camus (2005, p.20) states, 'from the moment absurdity is recognised, it becomes a passion [and] whether or not one can live with one's passions, that is the whole question'. In other words, once the human mind faces the absurdity of creating difference while striving for unity, one necessarily freezes into a state of inaction or desperation. For this reason, thinking of the absurd as a way of being in the world becomes necessary for humans to continue living and acting. To the question of whether the absurd dictates suicide Camus answers no, and the Sisyphus is his contribution in explaining how to live an absurd life. The main element of Camus's answer is that, in the face of absurdity, humans need to create their own meaning and

therefore strive for human rationality. Instead of dealing with the absurd as an external threat, Camus wants to bring our focus back to the subject and specifically the subject's capacity for action. This brings Camus very close to Arendt's thought since for both of them action is the most important element of human life and its primary effect is the creation of meaning.

Let us go back to the myth of Sisyphus briefly to notice what his action was in the face of his absurd life. The gods assigned Sisyphus a meaningless task in the sense that they did not provide an explanation or a higher end for this task. Sisyphus's experience is that all his efforts always end up in the rock rolling back and he has to start a new effort; there is no certainty of the outcome beyond his continuous action. Sisyphus could console himself in the hope that there is something outside his repetitive experience and a higher purpose for him, which would help him escape –in a spiritual sense– his predicament. Sisyphus could also refuse to carry on and quit his efforts since, in the absence of an end purpose, there is no good reason for him to act upon his rolling rock. We could even imagine Sisyphus to violently throw the rock away in rage or even accept death as preferable to meaningless action. Instead Camus (2005, p.117) prompts us to imagine Sisyphus smiling and keeping up with the task:

> I see the man going back down with a heavy yet measured step towards the torment of which he will never know the end. The hour like a breathing-space which returns as surely as his suffering, that is the hour of consciousness. At each of those moments when he leaves the heights and gradually sinks towards the lairs of the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock.

Camus's claim that Sisyphus is content is a rather peculiar one –if not provocative– and can take many interpretations. For example, Graham (2004, p.195) expresses disbelief in the idea that life can be meaningful by the recognition of its ultimate meaningless, and he claims that a meaningful life needs to be based both on objective meaning and subjective value. However, it is not accurate that Camus suggests life should find meaning in meaningless. Meaning will not come out of interaction with the absurd; this interaction only confirms one's independent

existence in the world. Instead, meaning is to be created through subjective experience while defying the absurd and such rebellious attitude is the source of subjective value. The individual has an ongoing purpose of constantly (re) negotiating a subjectively created meaning contrary to the absurdity one faces, and this makes life purposeful and valuable. When it comes to objective meaning, the centrality of solidarity –as the analysis will show– becomes crucial, because it brings humans and their subjective meanings together through interaction with the absurd. This is similar to Arendt's thought as discussed in the previous chapter as both thinkers place emphasis on the world shaped by human experience and warn against succumbing to a futile struggle against a dubious reality, which is either external to experience or tied to a generalised idea of human nature. For both thinkers, the foundation of human life should not be what nature dictates but the world created by the action of human beings.

There are, however, other approaches which overstate resistance to the absurd and how Camus suggests it should impact upon the individual. For example, Sleasman (2015, p.59) explains that absurd rebels must adhere to absurd principles because doing so is necessary for the relationship with the absurd, full of love hate, hostility and hope, to remain intact. The reason is that in this "paradoxical" relationship we bind ourselves to the absurd by refusing to mourn a loss and make meaning of it, and instead we maintain a position of permanent rage. While the idea of resisting the feeling of loss is an interesting aspect that stems out of Camus's thought, Sleasman's statement attributes to Camus a dialectical approach, seeing human clash with the world as a productive process. However, Camus rather focuses on the subject as an agent who creates meaning in the world in permanent resistance to the absurd, which is not external to the human mind but is the stimulus one receives when looking out at the world. In other words, it is not the clash between humans and the absurd that produces the world, rather absurdity is produced when an active human witnesses a passive universe and, despite this,

choses to create meaning for oneself. Furthermore, the feeling of scorn can hardly be interpreted as permanent rage, which would be far from Camus's suggestion that one is not meant to fight and oppose absurdity as an enemy of humanity.

It is crucial that Camus emphasises living with the absurd instead of trying to either fight it or escape it. Given that the absurd creates difference, to engage with the absurd and to not dismiss it becomes a question of what one's attitude should be towards difference. Camus, like Arendt, is against closing our eyes to a world of overwhelming difference and imagining a higher transcendental unity to escape reality. Most importantly, Camus is against a reaction to difference and an effort to impose unity in its place. If indeed the absurd is both the gap and the bridge then the world is what one decides to make out of absurdity. Camus, inspired by Nietzsche, sees the absurd life as the full affirmation of immanent existence, as expressed in the idea of *amor fati*, the love of fate, and this affirmation stems out of the movement of repetition (Sagi, 2002, p. 84). The repetition does not imply the lack of change but because it rests on immanent existence it refers to action in general. This is similar to Arendt's idea of new beginnings, as for Sisyphus each walk down the hill is the decision to start anew. Since there is no meaning, purpose or predictability, each time the task is attempted the effort is initiation of action. The love of fate should not be read here as an abandonment to faith but an affirmation of the human condition, which in the face of absurdity demands engagement with the world.

Regarding escapism, Camus argues that religion, as a "leap of faith" away from the absurd, robs humans from their potential to tame the absurd and make the most of their experience; it is a form of philosophical suicide. Camus claimed that he neither believed in god nor labelled himself as atheist but suggested that even if there is some higher meaning behind the world

humans can never legitimately claim to know or manage it (Sharpe, 2016). This is not disempowering the subject but, quite the opposite, allows freedom for action and grants one the power to construct meaning through particular experiences. In a sense, a search for the divine leads to an unconscious deification of the absurd. God appears incomprehensible and contradictory in human eyes, but such incoherence is where divine power lies. Camus (2005, p.31) explains how the absurd and the awe it inspires to humans are deified when 'the unthinkable unity between the general and the particular becomes god in the general sense, and the inability to understand becomes an existence that can explain everything'. In this way, by locating the power of meaning in this "absurd deity", humans actually deny themselves such power.

Humans should become creators of their own meaning also by resisting the impulse to replace divine creation through constructing all-encompassing, absolute meanings. This means that meaning should be created adjacent to relevant experience to explain it and allow it to inform action and not as a means of eradicating absurdity. To abandon oneself to the consolation of doctrines that claim to explain everything is disempowering to the subject because they deny the placement of man in the world through existence by refusing absurdity, the link between human and the world, and therefore an aspect of the human condition itself. This is very close to the way Arendt has described totalitarian ideology in the previous chapter as a nihilistic and violent one. Regarding nihilism and suicide, Camus claims that they are both self-defeating solutions since they represent not only a negation of freedom and responsibility but also an extreme acceptance of the absurd (Baltzer-Jaray, 2014, p.13). Mere confrontation with absurdity –in the instance of an experience– pushes one to engage with and respond to it but does not guide one in engaging in conscious action. Responding to the absurd can offer justification of all means towards the single end of a unified and higher meaning. As long as

one focuses on an imagined purpose of life, action adapts to this purpose and one becomes enslaved to it. This is where nihilism and negating violence can creep in and can only be avoided by establishing our own meaning and moral code of behaviour. Camus (2005, p.51) explains that even though human life has no inherent meaning, it has value; the source of this value is revolt which is the only realistic path to freedom.

In essence, Sisyphus's struggle represents the human struggle for freedom. Contrary to Rousseau's human born in freedom and then chained up, humans are already chained like Sisyphus and so need to make themselves free through their own actions; this is expressed as a desire to free oneself and a passion to create oneself (Ohana, 2016). The absurd cancels all chances of eternal freedom but at the same time it restores and magnifies freedom of action because an abandonment of hope and future means an increase in man's availability without an end that requires justification (Camus, 2005, p.55). Freedom in Camus is very close to Arendt's notion of freedom, as it will be shown through discussion of *The Rebel* and the notion of solidarity and action among peers. Still, also at the level of individual action, the affinity between the two thinkers is striking. For example, Novello (2008) suggests that for Sisyphus the uselessness of the task is a sign of creativity; freed from the necessity of the work of art as product –as teleological thinking would suggest– creation is instead identified as *aksesis* (practice), a form of self-discipline. The absurd creation is not a product in the sense that the creator is not interested in the telos of a praxis, the outcome, but in the creative attitude and process themselves. Once death becomes the only known end and external limit of action then within the course of life a realm of potential opens up. This clearly echoes Arendt's view that freedom is achieved through human action, which is not tied to necessity or fabrication but instead springs out of the human condition of natality in fulfilment of one's potential.

When freedom becomes prominent in the discussion of the absurd the question of resistance also comes to the forefront. Human engagement with the absurd becomes in a sense "proto-resistance", as a form of resistance that arises first between human existence and the world. Such resistance needs to be perpetual so that it does not annihilate the absurd but constantly renegotiates the relation to it for each single experience. The Sisyphean task is, strictly speaking, endless and the affirmation of the absurd it entails is value and meaning-producing (Weller, 2011, p.161). Meaning is born out of this resistance, including meaning of one's Self, therefore resistance shapes both the Self and the world. Here lies the most important element which distinguishes Camus from existentialists and specifically Sartre, who is the intellectual mostly compared to Camus in the literature. Both thinkers' work evolves around the concept of the absurd and in a sense complements each other; however, Sartre seems to conceive the absurd as something that needs to be resisted or overcome, while Camus prompts us to accept the absurd as a starting point (Blankschaen, 2013, p.29). The main reason Camus warns against negating absurdity is not a glorification of resistance or some sort of ethics of suffering. If, as explained, the absurd is mostly experienced in the human mind by virtue of belonging to the world, then it is part of the human condition. Therefore, if humans insist to assign meaning to the world to destroy the absurd then human rationality would also be violated (Madison, 1964). In other words, the attempt to fix meaning in absolute terms and beyond human subjectivity is a simultaneous attack on both absurdity and the human condition. The alternative is to 'exhaust the realm of the possible' in a process of constant resistance towards the absurd but without destroying it (ibid. p.227). This creative process of taming the absurd requires the exercise of agency to constantly reconfirm life and subjectivity, which is why Camus states that "in order to exist man must rebel".

Camus's engagement with the concept of rebellion continues from The Sisyphus to The Rebel and complements the guidelines of action for humans once decide to resist the absurd without annihilating or escaping it. Camus's work in a sense proceeded from Sisyphus and his futile hopeless labour to Prometheus whose love for humanity and rebellion against the gods has as a common denominator, the passion for life (Maougal and Kassoul, 2007, p.19). The transformation consists in passing from the individual struggle to the forging of solidarity, and from the confrontation of the absurd to the creativity of rebellion. The philosophy of the absurd is not itself the aim but a stage of Camus's Nietzschean phase as part of the effort to build a positive philosophy of Promethean humanism (Ohana, 2016, p.26). Therefore, the cause of the struggle transfers from confronting absurdity to the idea of solidarity. Rebellion implies self-awareness and a way to defend what one is (Bayley, 2013, p.30). If the absurd is an element of the human condition it must be exhausting to constantly deny one's absurd existence, while recognising it can be in a sense empowering, as long as the element of resistance is maintained. However, recognising the absurdity of individual existence extends to the rest of humanity. This recognition is for Camus the building block of solidarity and in turns it empowers not only the one but the whole because rebellion aims also at defending the human condition collectively: one rebels so that all can exist.

Rebellion, solidarity, and the limits to violence

The Rebel is essentially an effort to depart from the question of suicide and raise the question of murder; from existential violence that turns against oneself Camus moves to violence towards others and searches for its justification and limits. Since the absurd cannot guide human action then how should one act in the face of absurdity? As Sisyphus suggests, the lack of meaning and absurdity of life do not justify suicide. Not only humans can survive confrontation with absurdity, but they can actually see it as freedom to create their own

meaning. Metaphysical rebellion towards the absurd is the first authentic form of resistance that humans engage themselves in. This resistance is necessary so that humans will not give into nihilism, and the values created by the rebel are essentially a barrier against nihilism. The primary value that rebellion affirms is that of human life so Camus's starting premise in *The Rebel* is that murder and suicide are the same thing so that one must either accept or reject both (Camus, 2013b, p. x). Camus's reasoning is simple: if one does not commit suicide, this is because there is value in human life; therefore, if suicide is rejected murder must also be rejected. It is through this acceptance of one's life as valuable and through a realisation that other people's lives are likewise valuable that solidarity springs among human beings (Bayley, 2013). Camus in the Rebel attempts to set out the principles of human rebellion because he wants to place the logic of murderous violence outside the limits of revolt; solidarity is the social cement which achieves this. After stating in Sisyphus that suicide and nihilism are not an answer to the absurd, Camus takes the argument further to explain why nihilistic violence towards others is never legitimate.

Rebellion in Camus's thought might initially seem individualistic, but it actually undermines the very conception of the detached individual since somebody can prefer the risk of death to a denial of the rights defended. Hence, in rebellion one acts in the name of values that one considers more important than oneself and common to all humanity (Camus, 2013b p.2). Camus explicitly emphasises the strong link between the two concepts by explaining how solidarity is founded upon rebellion, and rebellion can only be justified by solidarity (ibid, p.9). Absurdity is what brings rebellion and solidarity together because in the face of the absurd one realises that this feeling must be shared by all humans who are brought together facing the world. This explains the famous statement "I rebel therefore we exist". Camus, for example, suggests that the evolution in his work from *The Stranger* to *The Plague* is one towards the

direction of solidarity and participation, from the experience of existential violence to sharing the experience of violent existence with others, which underlines his effort to use the absurd as bridge between individual struggle and shared human condition (Schweickart, 2018). Solidarity then comes before justice in the context of rebellion and is in a sense the precondition for constructing a society in which justice among humans will be meaningful. In other words, solidarity is not a means to the end of justice but a vindication of the human condition and what makes justice possible.

Absurdity manifests in the recognition that there is a fundamental contradiction between our serious approach to life and the notion that our existence is often both unpredictable and senseless (Mordechai, 2015). The seriousness towards and insistence on our arbitrary beliefs does not change even when we face the overall meaninglessness of the world. The element of solidarity is essential here for allowing the rebel to understand that the subjective creation of meaning is the weapon of the Self against the world but, accordingly, it also becomes the weapon of the community against the world. Instead of entrusting the meaning and identity of the community to an external and abstract reference, the community itself needs to shape its meaning and identity pluralistically through weaving together the particular meanings of its members. The only defensive mechanism of the community in this tough task of meaning negotiation is to construct the limits of action within the community to avoid domination. Samuels's (2016) reading of Camus suggests that the rebellious individual is the creator of the social movement instead of the other way around. This argument is based on the quote "I rebel, therefore we are" which can also be read as a transformation of individual rebellion to a collective force through the element of solidarity (ibid. p.111). In other words, revolt gives rise to a sense of human dignity which is generalised to solidarity. In this context, limits can be read in a reverse manner so that not only solidarity places limits to action in the name of human

dignity but also the realisation of humanity encloses individuals within solidarity and limits action accordingly.

At this point, it seems appropriate to highlight the proximity of Camus's and Arendt's political thought. In the Rebel, Camus explains that rebellion cannot exist without a strange form of love, which he summarises by quoting Dostoyevsky: 'if all are not saved, what good is the salvation of one only?' (2013b. p.246). This is strikingly similar to Arendt's idea that humans are only free and can pursue virtue and happiness among their peers. Human "togetherness" is the only way to get closer to reality and understanding the world by building together shared meanings based on individual experiences. Accordingly, for Camus, since the absurd teaches us nothing, there is no use to look into ourselves but instead we must look at others, all of us being condemned to live together in our absurd condition. Camus (1998, p.93) explains: '"The misery and greatness of this world: it offers no truths, but only objects for love. Absurdity is king, but love saves us from it." Again, this sounds striking similar to Arendt's "love of the world" and her insistence on the dignity of humanity. Against the certainty of a meaningless world, humans find value in experiencing life itself. In this way, humans rebel so that they can deny nihilism and opt for valuing life. This value system, grounded in human life, is a shared one by virtue of solidarity; therefore, the individual's love of life signifies one's love for the fellow-human or love of a shared human world.

Similar to Arendt, Camus's emphasis on individual experience has also been mistaken for individualism rather than an effort to bridge the gap between the one and the many and ensure that a political community is characterised by plurality rather than generating its power from a mythical notion of origins and belonging. The political character of Camus's notion of human solidarity stems from the collective and pluralistic construction of shared meaning based on

individual experiences, and from the focus on political action and participation. Hayden (2016, p.85) explains how Camus offers a notion of existence based on a cosmopolitan sense of ethical and political resistance to domination and inequality. These cosmopolitan attitudes and practices can be enacted in the present moment without being totalised into teleological metaphysics of progressive reason. On the one hand, this implies that existence is fully revealed through political action and inseparable from it. On the other hand, Camus's cosmopolitan thinking emphasises the value of the present as opposed to locking freedom in future expectations, hence endlessly deferring it to tomorrow and reducing the present to a mere moment to be functionally transformed into a future grandeur. Therefore, what Camus really objects to is the notion of necessity as the principle of political action, in a manner that echoes Arendt's fears of reducing political action to necessity and sacrificing the potential inherent in imminent action.

Consequently, both Arendt and Camus see the human condition caught up in the tragic paradox of its enormous potential and creativity on the one hand, its temporality and frailty on the other. In Arendt the paradox is explored in terms of natality and mortality, while in Camus in terms of rebellion and absurdity (Isaac, 1994). As seen in the previous chapter, for Arendt natality is the human potential to act upon a beginning and create something new. This cannot prevent mortality, but it is the response of human action that despite mortality chooses to commit itself to natality instead. In the same way, I argue here that rebellion can also be seen as human potential which aims to experience and create despite its constant confrontation with the absurd. First of all, Camus (2013b, p.1) himself defines the rebel as 'a man who says no: but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation. He is also a man who say yes as soon as he begins to think for himself'. Two things are prominent here; first, the rebel has the potential to affirm or to negate when confronting the absurd; second, the rebel's "no" implies the existence of

limitations which, if understood as a borderline, indicate there is a "yes" on the opposite side. Regarding the first point, through action vis-à-vis the absurd the rebel has the potential to be or not be –act or not act– in a certain manner. Regarding the second point, the rebel affirms the existence of limits and therefore negates certain action beyond those limits.

Rebellion is seen as an aspect of human condition because 'man is the only creature who refuses to be what he is', Camus says (2013b, p. xii). Human beings strive to shape their own subjectivity and be at ease with their existence and oppose forces which prevent them from doing so. For Camus the problem that arises is whether such opposition will end up in nihilism and destruction or it can be balanced; his solution is hopeful and rests upon the positive aspects of human potential. Rebellion is human potential because it can be both a negation and an affirmation; it represents the possibility to say both yes and no to the world. In that sense, even if there is such a thing as human nature, the rebel's human condition encourages a resistance to it and the potential to shape it. Even though human potential is both a negation and an affirmation, 'the rebel defies more than he denies' (ibid. p.13) and therefore rebellion has a prominent positive and creative character. The rebel says no in the sense that he refuses to succumb to nihilism and meaninglessness but also says yes because he finds value in life and remains committed to it because this is the source of the rebel's potential in the first place. Accordingly, rebellion is the only possible solution to maintain potential. In other words, avoiding straightforward interaction with absurdity through rebellion implies that one stays trapped within negation and does not proceed to balance it with affirmative action; this is the same as giving up human potential. The rebel instead decides to confront absurdity and meaningless and moves towards creative action to shape subjective meaning and share it in solidarity with other human beings.

Camus (2013b, p.1) claims that an act of rebellion gives rise to an awakening of conscience and a set of values which generate from 'a spontaneous loyalty to certain aspects of himself' (ibid). Rebellion is then also self-affirmation and it springs spontaneously by virtue of human condition. The rebel's fight is defensive, not offensive, and can be seen as an attempt to (re)define humanity and impose one's being against dehumanisation; equally, the rebel refrains from dehumanising an opponent (Mikics and Zaretsky, 2013). This is why the rebel is meant to deny a master but not as a human being; the rebel essentially denies domination. Camus proposes a limit to both others' and the rebels' actions in order to manage power relations in a community and avoid domination. Thus, Arendt's and Camus's conceptions of the political are strikingly close given the centrality of action and plurality (solidarity) in their work as opposed to the use of violence and domination. Camus's commitment to the non-violent politics of dialogue can be understood in Arendtian terms as a commitment to the communicative character of a truth that binds people together (Malpas, 2016). For Arendt this means that people are only free when they contribute to building reality and shared meaning with their peers without violence, while in Camus this translates to the placement of limits that exclude domination from action in the name of solidarity.

The danger of violence and domination arises in power relations due to the character of rebellion being so complex. As explained, a rebel shall move from meaninglessness to creativity, while negation needs to be balanced with affirmation so that rebellion fulfils its purpose and translates into human potential. Nevertheless, both the placement of limits and the maintenance of potentiality are extremely fragile tasks –which also links to Arendt's claim of the fragility of action. For Weller (2011, p.66) creativity is the most absurd element of action in the same way that an affirmation of meaninglessness is the way to overcome it. On the one hand, this suggests that creative action does not always carry a concrete meaning or an accurate

prediction of the meaning which will emerge out of it. On the other hand, the dual process of affirmation and negation of meaninglessness implies the presence of a limit at which affirmation meets negation. Camus (2013b, p.9) explains that 'the problem in revolutionary thought is that rebellion must respect the limits it discovers in itself, which are limits developed 'where minds meet and, in meeting, begin to exist', so that revolutionary thought is a 'perpetual state of tension'. These limits can be understood as the meeting point of individuals out of which power relations spring, serving a similar function to Arendt's promise and forgiveness.

For Camus it is crucial, although extremely hard, to balance affirmation and negation by placing limits to revolt. The tension that limits create can be read as an analogy to power relations. The main challenge for rebellion is to remain true to solidarity and come to terms with the tension that power relations create by placing limits that prevent action from turning power relations to domination. Capstick (2003, p.461) supports that Camus was aware of the impasse that arises from such balancing effort but prefers to experience the tension between negation and affirmation instead of 'accepting the dialectics of a historical perspective'. Camus's moderate politics disagree with a reduction of complex power relations to the idea of a dialectical relation which only appears to serve as an instrument of the fulfilment of the course of history: 'if nothing is true or false, our only remaining principle is efficiency and this efficiency is what people understand as the currency of power, then instead of a differentiation between the just and the unjust the differentiation becomes one of master and slave' (Camus, 2013b, p. ix). Camus here echoes Arendt in agreement that power is not a means to an end but the purpose of politics itself. Human relations of solidarity are the very essence of politics that bring together humans who struggle against an absurd existence. Therefore, to understand human relations in terms of dialectics takes the focus off subjects to something higher as well as abstract and reduces human life to a servant of history.

The reduction of human power relations to dialectics in the service of a historical end is brought up by those who confront the absurdity of the world wanting to make sense of it but finding themselves intimidated by the complicity of power relations and the unpredictability of action. This is where violent domination lurks. Camus (ibid, p.13) explains that violence intrudes in human relations and destroys solidarity 'when the rebel forgets the original purpose of rebellion and tired between the tension cause by the simultaneously positive and negative attitude abandons oneself to complete negation or total submission'. Both positions either perpetuate or create violence and the alternative Camus offers is his politics of moderation. The term moderation is often used to describe avoidance of confrontation and therefore escapism. In Camusean thought, however, moderation is linked to involvement and responsibility. Sharpe (2005) conceptualises Camus's rebellion as moderation by defining absolute affirmation and absolute negation as two extremes. Excessive affirmation and absolute refusal of all violence leaves injustice unopposed and leads to victimisation, while excessive negation makes violence central to action as the means to make history. Moderation then is not a way to avoid making tough decisions and remain passive but to refrain from the danger of rationalising murder (Spicer 2019). Moderation also signifies the placement of limits in action and translates into the politics of dialogue, as opposed to the two extremes which aspire to pose as a monologue and replace solidarity with solitude.

For Camus, a political position that is modest implies politics 'free of messianism and disencumbered of nostalgia for an earthly paradise' (Camus, 2008, p.33). This challenges those who dismiss Camus's thought for being utopian. Camus was himself aware of the utopian label assigned to him and has provided a very clear answer for his position on violence but also acknowledged the difficulty that his suggestion involves:

> People like myself want not a world in which murder no longer exists (we are not so crazy as that!) but rather one in which murder is not legitimate. Here indeed we are Utopian - and contradictory. For we do live, it is true, in a world where murder is legitimate, and we ought to change it if we do not like it. But it appears that we cannot change it without risking murder. Murder thus throws us back on murder, and we will continue to live in terror whether we accept the fact with resignation or wish to abolish it by means which merely replace one terror with another (Camus, 2008, p.32).

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, Camusean thought attempts to offer a set of values to guide action and the main value promoted is human life. This does not mean that Camus asks for a world of complete non-violence; instead, the search of values implies that the main concern is legitimacy and moral standards. Camus accepts violence as a possibility but wishes to frame it as a non-legitimate and non-desirable aspect of political action, which is to be avoided at all costs and, if this is not possible, to bind it to personal responsibility (Schweickart, 2018). If the only acceptable end for Camus is human life and solidarity it would be a contradiction to see violent means to this end as legitimate. Nevertheless, the problem that emerges –and Camus himself recognises– is exactly that violence is necessary to defend human dignity, but it is at the same time the biggest threat to human dignity. Violence, in other words, is what humans have to engage with in the struggle against it. This echoes Fanon's view – discussed in the next chapter– that in the context of colonialism violence becomes structural and affects all subjects. Camus (2013b, p.244) finds himself frustrated by having to operate in a political space full of violence because any effort to resist it reminds the rebel of being already part of this space:

> The rebels who united against death and want to construct, on the foundation of the human species, a triumphant immortality, are terrified at the prospect of being obliged to kill in their turn. Nevertheless, if they retreat they must accept death; if they advance they must accept murder. Rebellion cut off from its origins and cynically travestied, oscillates, on all levels, between sacrifice and murder.

The dilemma of the rebel is crystallised in Camus's work *Les Justes* through the question of whether revolt is based on an abstract cause to be pursued by any means or the primary cause is human dignity and the worth of human life. Camus shows through this dilemma between love for life and love for justice, how both sides have lost sight of the ultimate value which alone justifies the power play of politics, which is humanity and the respect for human life (Schwarz, 1972, p.30). Kaliayev is the rebel who fights the tyranny of the Tsarist regime, but when his comrades assign to him the assassination of the Grand Duke he refuses to do it once he realises the Duke's children are present, confirming the limits of his action. Kaliayev at a later time completes his mission and while in prison he refuses to be pardoned insisting instead upon his execution; he finds it necessary to be punished with his life for his actions so that the murder his committed will not appear as legitimate and affect the nobility of the cause. Camus portrays Kaliayev as being the least comfortable with murder among his peers, even though he is equally committed to the just cause, and this makes him a symbol of the rebel's dilemma. In a later commentary on his work Camus (1965, p. 156) explains that:

> The great purity of the terrorist of the Kaliayev type is that for him murder coincides with suicide. A life is paid for by a life. The reasoning is false but respectable. (A life taken is not worth a life given.) Today, murder by proxy. No one pays.

In the face of such moral impasse, the limits to violence can be seen as the rebel's way out of this violent context and a clear objective of the struggle. Humans are trapped between surrendering to injustice and becoming part of it because they are encircled by violence. This means giving up on change, due to being burdened by a violent past and present, or being enchanted with a future promise of change, hence turning a blind eye to becoming part of a violent present. In this context, Camus (2013b, p.138) finds both bourgeois and revolutionary interpretations of violence problematic, as the former turns a blind eye on everyday violence and the latter justifies violence as a response to such violent reality. Foley (2008, p.208) praises Camus for distancing himself both from a necessary and cathartic view of violence and from a

defence of the status quo on the grounds that political violence can deteriorate society; Camus proposes instead an alternative limited defence of political violence. This limited defence rests on the condition that the rebel does not forget the origins of revolt and the "paradoxical premise" on which it is based, which is human solidarity (ibid, p.209). Human solidarity springs out of rebellion and rebellion can only be justified through solidarity; therefore, legitimate political action must rest on the basis of these mutually generated values. Violence is a means to the end of fighting violence; therefore, this kind of contradictory means can never be justified by its end.

From this perspective, moderation in Camus should not be seen as the resolution of a contradiction, or a reconciliation with the status quo, but as affirmation of the contradiction and a decision to resist it in a perpetual conflict without an attempt to escape or avoid the responsibility of limits (Sollazzo, 2014, p.55). In political terms, Camus is not a pacifist but rather an agonist, who recognises that in order to avoid a perpetual cycle of domination the struggle needs to rest on the principle of self-limitation. By maintaining the principle of human solidarity as an end, the subject is allowed to focus on the means of the struggle and place the limitations responsibly and without coercion. Taking this to the level of a community in rebellion, there is no need for leaders and followers to dominate the course of the struggle, but rather the limits of the group are set by exactly the same principle that brought it together in the first place. To avoid immoral action and maintain solidarity but still act, there is need for a limit on how violence can be used in rebellion, which is what makes rebellion authentic and possible (Neiman, 2017). The agonistic element in Camus's politics of moderation acknowledges the tension of power relations and admits that one might resort to violence to put an end to domination and injustice. Nevertheless, the limits of Camusean politics reach the

level of agonism and refuse to move beyond it to legitimise violent action as a necessary element of political action.

This proves that Camus's work is an attempt to show that politics may be saturated by violence, but this should not be taken for granted and nihilistically assume that politics must necessarily be violent. A revolt against an unjust condition can easily lead to moral nihilism, which suggests that there are no limits so that everything is permitted, hence leading to the legitimisation of murder. Camus realised this through his reading of Dostoyevsky as well as his own experience of the second world war (Davison, 1997, p.114). The historical context of Camus's political experience has deeply shaped his thought. By divorcing revolt from nihilistic, limitless revolution, Camus is hoping to rescue politics from totalitarianism (Franchev, 2011, p.40). Camus experienced the world in a transition from the one war to the other and saw Algeria, his homeland, becoming a colonial battlefield. Most importantly, Camus experienced Nazi Europe, what he called "a Hilterian religion", as a nihilist revolution (Camus, 2013b, p.135). His work can therefore be read as a response to such historical circumstances. Isaac's (1994) work compares Arendt's and Camus's political thought and emphasises their common focus on the metaphysics of totalitarianism. The most prominent themes for both are the bureaucratisation of murder, the radical subversion of language, the destruction of subjectivity through loneliness, and ideological fanaticism (ibid, p.45). This partially explains the two thinkers' proximity of their thought on violence and politics.

Similar to Arendt, Camus's view of totalitarianism is pointing out its inhuman and unstoppable character. For example, his fictional work *The Plague* is essentially a metaphor for the murderous logic of totalitarianism equated to an epidemic. Human life loses its value for the

sake of an abstract idea which is to be realised in the future. Camus (2013b, p.139) explains the logic of totalitarian regimes in these words:

> They will put an abstract idea above human life, even if they call it history, to which they themselves have submitted in advance and to which they will decide quite arbitrarily, to submit everyone else as well. The problem of rebellion will no longer be solved by arithmetic, but by estimating probabilities. Confronted with the possibility that the idea may be realised in the future, human life can be everything or nothing. The greater the faith that the estimate places in this final realization, the less the value of human life. At the ultimate limit, it is no longer worth anything at all.

In Camus's fiction, *Caligula* also represents the revolutionary impulse of totalitarian ideologies to destroy the existing order for the sake of a future utopia, and the danger that lurks in it (Hopkins 1994). Caligula when faced with absurdity desires to gain freedom from it; however, not only eliminating the absurd is impossible but his permissiveness is inadequate in providing freedom to a man in isolation. Hence Caligula is the isolated individual of the totalitarian regime and his monologue represents the absence of speech and dialogue in totalitarianism. The replacement of solidarity and dialogue with bureaucracy and absolute thought also echoes Arendt when Camus laments living in an age of terror 'because persuasion is no longer possible; because man has been wholly submerged in History; because we live in a world of abstractions, of bureaus and machines, of absolute ideas and [we] suffocate among people who think they are absolutely right, whether in their machines or in their ideas' (Camus, 2008, p.29). The presence of absolutes implies the absence of limits and vice versa. The error of the historical rebel lies in the deduction that everything is permitted, wanting higher power and infinite freedom, even from absurdity (Ohana, 2016, p.231). In a world which offers no definite answers and human meaning needs to be negotiated and shared, subjects are locked into power relations; however, this is a source of anxiety due to the unpredictable and irreversible character of action. The reaction to such existential anxiety is a world that relies only on facts and efficiency.

This world necessarily remains indifferent to individual needs and hopes; the particular is not valued and the link between the individual and the group becomes superficial. But for Camus one transforms immediate experience into meaning exactly through such neglected needs and hopes (Maougal and Kassoul, 2007). Overall, any attempt for action that is not based on the principle of solidarity is doomed to find itself trapped in a violence, which is justified as necessary for an end other than a political community of freedom and human dignity. This is what Camus bitterly realised in the years of the Algerian anti-colonial struggle for independence and the reason why he insisted on his own version of Camusean rebellion as opposed to revolutionary action that leaned more towards negation than affirmation.

Camus's Algeria of absurdity and rebellion

Camus's effort to safeguard politics from violence and furnish it with values and limits can be best seen in his controversial positions on the Algerian struggle for independence. As Arendt tried to make a theoretical point on her experience of Eichmann in Jerusalem only to be misunderstood by her peers, Camus also faced fierce criticisms regarding Algeria. In both cases, the controversial positions should be read through the theoretical assumptions that shaped them and at the same time the autobiographical element needs to be recognised as a motivation behind reaching such theoretical conclusions. Camus found himself against both sides of the violent struggle for Algeria, as he argued against French colonial injustice but also against an independent Algeria which would reject its French element. In a sense, Camus writes about his own revolt and refuses the privileged position of the author as the "arbiter of meaning" (Berthold 2013, p.151). This means that his work cannot be read as a manual for revolutionary action but as a contribution of one's reflection on experience. Indeed, without appreciating Camus's experience of Algeria, there is a danger of mistaking the complexity of his thought for inconsistency and his moderate positions for evasion of tough questions.

For example, Haleh-Davis (2011) discusses Camus's philosophy of the absurd as tied to neo-liberal thought. In this view, Camus's cosmopolitanism–valuing regional over national identity in post-colonial Algeria–betrays efforts to downplay the structural impacts of colonial violence and renders resistance partial and devoid of politically structured solidarities. Haleh-Davis warns that the emphasis on atomised individuals, 'loosely affiliated through a vaguely defined humanism denies any possibility of historically-formed collectivities and has deep resonances with the neo-liberal vision of the social' (ibid, p.228). There is some merit in tracing continuities of political attitudes placed in the historical context that allowed them to emerge. This is in a sense what Haleh-Davis's argument attempts to do by focusing on the impact of cold war discourses and the Eurocentric character of many of Camus's arguments. Nevertheless, such task requires to equally consider the impact of the inter-war period and totalitarianism, and the philosophical traditions with which Camus wants to engage and has been shaped by. Not all political thought that shows interest in the individual can be labelled as neo-liberal. This chapter has already claimed that for Camus individual action and rebellion are a stepping stone to realising humanity through solidarity. Therefore, his political concerns are the opposite of individualistic, trying to justify and secure the link between the individual and the community.

Regarding Camus's Europeanism, it needs to be read in its historical context inspired from resistance to Nazi occupation and the experience of totalitarian violence as explained earlier. Camus fought passionately against the discourse of fascist dominated Europe by supporting the competitive discourse of European values, democracy and pluralism (Oswald, 2001). Perhaps this is why both he and Arendt are mistakenly interpreted today as supportive of neo-liberal ideas. Neo-liberal thought may have shaped itself out of this historical experience to an

extent, however, it represents merely one of the possible discourses. Therefore, it is problematic to equate all responses to totalitarianism with neoliberal thought and claim a continuity from cold war politics to current discourses. One example of the complexity of Camus's so-called Europeanism is his lecture *The New Mediterranean Culture* in which he locates the "Mediterranean genius" in the encounter between East and West and in the ability to humanise rigid religious and political doctrines so that humans matter before faith and ideology (Foxlee, 2010, p.53). This suggests that when Camus talks about Europe he does not necessarily share an understanding of a dominant colonial and superior western civilisation; Camus's Europe is viewed from Algeria and from the eyes of a Frenchman. This has clearly not been appreciated widely in the literature. For example, Sajed (2013, p.6) suggest that Camus's vision of a multi-ethnic and multicultural Algeria federated to the French motherland stems from his view of colonisation as the ineluctably forward movement of (Western) civilisation as History, and hence 'a *fait accompli* requiring no interrogation'. Reading Camus's position on Algeria not only dismisses the view that Camus took for granted Algeria's French destiny but highlights the complexity of the case and openly questions the ability to provide a simple solution:

> Algeria is not France. It is not even Algeria. [It is not France] though many people, superb in their ignorance, continue to insist that it is. Yet it is home to more than a million French men and women, as is all too often forgotten in certain quarters. These simplifications only exacerbate the problem (Camus, 2013a, p.123).

Camus always insisted that the humanity and worth of the Arabs and Berbers needs to be recognised and believed that *pieds noirs* and natives could live together united against continental rulers who –directly or indirectly– dominated them. Few scholars recognise that Camus went as far as criticising the French of being "unconsciously certain" that they were of a superior race to Arabs and Malagasy's, just as the Germans viewed themselves as "Aryans" superior to other European peoples (Scherr, 2017). Camus was convinced that although *pieds-*

noirs and natives were separated in many ways, they were still united under the principle of solidarity and shared experience. An aspect of class solidarity can be seen in his work *Les Muets*, in which French and Algerian workers' identity as oppressed proletarians takes priority over their ethnic differences (ibid, p.79). Camus's references to class inequality was probably not an effort to claim his socialist credentials but a call for solidarity among those who shared the same conditions in the same country and therefore had the same claim to human dignity. For Camus it would be unacceptable to bypass such solidarity and resort to a violent break-up in the name of nationalism. It is surprising that Camus's argument has been misinterpreted when he has so clearly expressed his position:

> Eighty percent of the French settlers are not colonists but workers and small businessmen. The standard of living of the workers, though superior to that of the Arabs, is inferior to that of workers in the metropole […] Must these hardworking Frenchmen, who live in isolated rural towns and villages, be sacrificed to expiate the immense sins of French colonization? (Camus, 2013a, p.126).

Besides unfounded claims that Camus was an apologist for colonial discrimination and western domination, more nuanced criticisms have suggested that he failed to be vocal in his total condemnation of colonialism and to reject openly French presence in Algeria. Edward Said in Culture and Imperialism (1994) reproduces O'Brien's critique that Camus's work 'obscures the facts of imperial actuality' and takes it further to claim that Camus is not just representative of merely "Western consciousness" but rather of "Western dominance" (ibid, p.172). The main argument is that Camus's work actually reflects the privilege of his individual experience but at the same time ignores history and takes the state of Franco-Algerian affairs for granted in a vague portrayal of "nameless Arabs" and in the absence of a historical and political background. Curiously, Said claims that he does not want to "blame" Camus but in fact finds his work interesting (ibid, p.181) in that it incorporates and relies on a massive French discourse on Algeria. In his own words:

> What I want to do is to see Camus's fiction as an element in France's methodically constructed political geography of Algeria, which took many generations to complete, the better to see it as providing an arresting account of the political and interpretative contest to represent, inhabit, and possess the territory itself (ibid, p.176).

Said does not engage with Camus's philosophical arguments and dismisses the element of absurdity in Camus's work as "superstructure" (ibid, p.181); arguably then, for Said colonial domination must be the "base" of Algerian society. Interestingly, this superstructure, the mentality and experience of French Algerians –absurd or not– of which apparently Camus is an example, is what Said seems to be interested in and wants to expose through his critique. Camus's experience as a French Algerian who finds himself to be a colonial stranger in what he considers his homeland seems to be perfectly consistent with his philosophical and political claims. Camus is the tragic reminder that the Algerian anti-colonial struggle was not only a clear dialectical opposition between the colonised and the coloniser. Colonialism had permeated the whole of social and political space in Algeria and subsequently shaped everything in it. Camus's position reflects the complexity of both his French-Algerian identity and the colonial reality. This is consistent with Fanon's argument that colonial violence affects and shapes both the coloniser and the colonised, as the next chapter shall show. Marrouchi (2000) argues that Said suggested to read Camus as a colonial witness but he himself failed to account for the personal and moral dilemma Camus found himself in due to his *pieds-noirs* identity, even though it is repeatedly manifested in his fictional work. Therefore, instead of interpreting Camus's position on Algerian independence as a betrayal to his commitment on solidarity and humanism, we can interpret his thought on these concepts through his experience as a French Algerian colonial subject. Both native Algerians and the *pieds-noirs* were shaped and constrained, even though very differently and unequally, by the same colonial discourse.

It is peculiar how Camus's self-identification as an Algerian has been regarded so problematic and contestable. This claim should be taken seriously but not as a simplistic, homogeneous geographical or national-cultural identity, but rather in terms of the conflicted history and complex hybridity, which is characteristic of the colonial world (Carroll, 2007). As the above analysis has shown, Camus was not easily intimidated by incomprehensibility and contradiction. In his philosophical work, balancing opposing elements is preferable in that it allows for a creative evolution characterised by potential, instead of a dialectical clash that moves in linear progression. Attempting to understand Camus's position by using his own theoretical tools suggests that he primarily rebels against his absurd colonial identity by both affirming and negating his French identity. Camus can be seen as "the colonist who refuses to be a coloniser" characterised by the intention to side with the colonised in changing the status quo but at the same time placing necessary limits in both sides regarding their actions in the conflict (Kaluza 2019). Contrary to a Manichean view of two homogenous groups of colonised and colonisers, this approach reveals the complexity of subjectivities shaped equally although in different ways by one dominant colonial discourse.

Camus finds his own way to rebel against this discourse by maintaining his principle of solidarity while advocating justice. In doing so, Camus refuses to surrender to his colonial fate; therefore, his thought reveals both negation and affirmation. This is not hypocrisy or intellectual weakness but a commitment to his own potential to be or not to be fixed into a certain rigid identity. Hence Camus refuses to renounce his French part that seems to automatically bear the guilt of colonial domination but also refuses to renounce his Algerian part, even though he protests against an Algeria that excludes him. Schalk (2004, p.343) suggests that Camus was more comfortable in his Algerian skin than many critics suggested, expecting that he had to be torn and ridden with guilt regarding his identity of an impossible

hybrid. Nevertheless, in the same manner that one must "imagine Sisyphus happy" one can also imagine Camus happy. If Camus was loyal to his idea of rebellion then his position on Algeria can be read as an effort to impose himself, the *pieds-noirs*, to the world and create his own meaning of his identity and place within Algeria. Contrary to many critics trying to shape him as a coloniser –either of good willed or not– Camus refused to be defined as a subject in a manner that is alien to him and estranges him wither of his Algerian or his French self; against generalisation he sought his particularity and the potential of other *pieds-noirs* to defend their own particularity.

Camus's affirms his French side but negates colonialism. In Camus's work the cry "to be nothing" expresses his wish for French Algerians to be seen as autonomous subjects wrestling with cultural difference; this is a form of 'an antidote to colonial imbroglio' and an example of the isolationism with which colonialism poisons a society (Hughes, 2001, p.108). Colonialism is negated because, as the concept of solidarity implies, an element that violates human dignity does not turn only against those suffering the most but against humanity as a whole. Politics and morality are perverted by colonialism since it shapes all discourses to its own measure. In *The Guest* Camus reveals the tensions in the relationship between guest and host as they become perverted by colonialism. In this context, we can see how colonialism can be thought of as a violation of individual sovereignty, by turning the ethics of unconditional hospitality to a "tyranny of the guest" (Kim, 2013, p.260). Colonial violence expands on both "guests" and hosts" as long as it attempts to rigidly shape their ethics and therefore moral existence.

Furthermore, the colonist is also dominated by the French colonial state. For example, instead of reading *The Stranger* as a mere passive description of the colonial context that remains indifferent to the murder of a nameless Arab, we can emphasise Camus's critique of the

colonial concept of justice as a whole. Camus here does not simply question morality in his approach to justice but is interested in uncovering domination and refusing "the government of the soul" (Lincoln, 2011, p.277). The crime for which the Stranger is condemned to death is his refusal to assimilate his behaviour into the dominant value system in a manner that his very existence calls the dominant discourse into question. As long as the French Algerian conforms to the fixed position then siding with the colonial status-quo is evident; however, this does not imply freedom to practice one's potential and having a say in the construction of one's subjectivity. The moment any subject of colonial domination decides to question governing discourses realises the restrictions imposed and subsequently the line separating the powerful and the powerless reveals its complexity. Therefore, to claim that a French Algerian must automatically express the French colonial discourse denies the possibility to resist dominant discourses but also obscures the fact that the domination of a colonial state has multiple faces and not merely violent subordination of the natives.

Camus reveals the potential of multiple different paths of anticolonialism against a "zero-sum game anti-colonialism" and emphasises particular existing relations instead of imagined dialectical clash (Le Sueur, 2014, p.34). The struggle against the colonial state is a struggle against all forms of domination it expresses. Thus, Camus saw himself as part of the struggle and his position was not similar to that of other French intellectuals who wished to express an opinion to support a "foreign" cause to remain faithful to their left-wing principles. Camus was never at ease among his contemporary intellectuals and detested their conviction that they had something to say about everything or, even worse, that everything could be reduced to what they liked to say; this explains his later silence on Algeria (Judt, 1998). Before falling silent, Camus had clearly explained his objections. In the discussion around the ends and means of political action, Camus's political essays on Algeria suggest that the otherwise honourable ends

of political struggle become dishonourable when evoked to justify the use of ignoble means (Carroll, 2007, p.108). For Camus it is paradoxical to condemn humans to death so that the oppressed can live as "new men" and to commit unjust acts in the name of justice. Camus's "fault" was that he denied an independent Algeria as long as it would not be formed on the basis of solidarity with the *pieds-noirs* community. Camus (2013a, p.127) had clearly expressed his support for the struggle against colonial domination but only under the condition that the limits of such action would be placed first and violence would not be seen as legitimate:

> Let us admit, therefore, once and for all, that the fault [violence] here is collective, but let us not draw from this fact the conclusion that expiation is necessary. Such a conclusion would become repugnant the moment others were called upon to pay the price. In politics, moreover, nothing is ever expiated. Errors can be repaired, and justice can be done. The Arabs are due a major reparation, in my opinion, a stunning reparation. But it must come from France as a whole, not from the blood of French men and women living in Algeria. Say this loud and clear and I know that those settlers will overcome their prejudices and participate in the construction of a new Algeria.

It is impossible and inessential here to estimate whether such guarantee would ever be fulfilled. The point of this discussion is to use the case of Algeria to read Camusean thought in actual political circumstances. With this purpose in mind, Camus here insists once again that the unpredictability of political action should not cause a pre-emptive violent response. His argument implies that justice for the colonised will only be achieved through solidarity and only if such justice is not contradicted by committing itself to an injustice against French Algerians who should be allowed to not represent the French colonial state but themselves. Interestingly, Camus writes here in the form of a promise, which strongly evokes Arendt's promise of politics as a remedy to the unpredictable and irreversible effects of action. Camus explains that "in politics nothing is even expiated" to suggest the irreversibility of political action; however, he also supports that the action of founding a new Algeria which allows all its inhabitants to coexist in solidarity can begin with a promise of such solidarity among native and French Algerians.

Unsurprisingly, Camus's proposal also bears a hidden element of Arendt's other political "remedy", namely forgiveness. Dunwoodie (2008) examines how Camus, in an effort to legitimise a presence of French nationals in Algeria free from the roots of colonialism, uses "forgetting" as a tool of selective memory. According to this idea, erasing is necessary for a positive ontology of rootlessness. This is clearly problematic when it comes to pre-colonial memory, violent occupation and privileged domination being neglected, even if seen as an act of existential self-defence from the part of the settlers. Such position justifies the previously discussed criticism of Said that Camus's plan is to obscure elements of domination. What is important, however, is that Camus is not focusing only on erasing colonial memories but more precisely a 'meditation on the processes of both forgetting and remembering' and reflection on 'their function and interaction in a politically sensitive context' (ibid, p.49). For Arendt as well, forgiveness does not necessarily imply forgetting altogether but is instead a process of negotiation crucial for encouraging action and easing the consequences of its unpredictable and irreversible character. Placing Camus in this context helps refine the argument regarding his redefinition of historical memory in post-colonial Algeria. Arguing that post-colonial Algeria will travel back to time in its pre-colonial status –expressed through a certain social imaginary– is as problematic as claiming that the postcolonial space should be built on an ahistorical basis according to which colonial violence is to be forgotten. Negotiating a new Algerian identity would consider the past but also imagine the future through the promise of common action. The key notion here is action in solidarity –plurality in Arendtian terms– which Camus saw as the only hope for the foundation of a new Algeria which would leave behind colonial domination without smuggling in the violence this domination planted in society. In that sense, Camus's position was not conformist but radical.

Conclusion

This chapter has engaged with the work of Albert Camus to reveal his proximity to Arendtian political theory, which explains how his philosophy of the absurd also perceives violence as a negation of human potential. The realisation that one is alive but there is no objective, universal meaning in life is the root of absurdity and human beings have the option to acknowledge and defy it or be crushed by it. Confrontation with the meaninglessness of the world brings uncertainty and insecurity and efforts to establish a fixed meaning necessarily leads to a violent negation of human potential. However, humans are not condemned to restrict themselves to nihilism and constant violence. The alternative suggested by Camus is rebellion which is essentially action under the principle of solidarity and can be understood as human potential because of its dual capacity to negate and affirm. The rebels can say both yes and no to life's experiences, and if they manage to balance within its controversial character, they can avoid dialectical clashes, creating their own meaning which is constantly renegotiated within the scope of human dignity. For this purpose, Camus suggests that in the negotiation of meaning it is crucial to agree on the placement of limits to ensure that rebellion remains true to its original cause. Violence needs to be placed outside the limits of moral action and even when employed it should never be seen as legitimate because this would signify a commitment to negation over affirmation. In applying these assumptions to Camus's position on anti-colonial struggle in Algeria, it becomes clearer that Camus was not a supporter of western domination or an apologist for colonial violence. Camus was aware of the capacity of violence to ruin the authenticity of rebellion and the potential of human beings to create their own meaning. Camus's identity as a French-Algerian was a paradox itself, but he wished not to abandon it but to renegotiate it and leave it open to transformation, allowing himself to have a say in shaping his subjectivity. This idea will be further explored in the work of Fanon who, although

read as the exact opposite voice on the issue of Algeria, his understanding of how colonial violence affects subjectivity strangely echoes Camus's concerns.

Chapter 3: Colonial violence: Negation and lack of politics in the zone of non-being.

The literature engages with Fanon's work through two of his most well-known books. The first one is *Black Skins White Masks* (Fanon, 2007) which focuses on Blackness, racism and colonial domination. The second one is *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon, 1963) which also looks at the dehumanising effects of colonialism but does so to discuss the establishment of a social movement that fights the injustices of colonialism. In this chapter I analyse these two works not as separate or simply overlapping but as a continuous effort to understand colonial violence and theorise decolonisation accordingly. The *Wretched of the Earth* has been seen by many as a revolutionary manifesto and, by many others, as the proof of Fanon's support to and praise of revolutionary violence. The chapter aims to go beyond this simplistic reading and show how Fanon too understands violence as a negation of the potential. The key contribution of this chapter to the main argument is that Fanon does not simply agree with the previous thinkers on the key function of violence, but he actually explains in detail how the subject is affected and in which ways potential is negated.

The first section explores how Fanon described colonialism and its effects on human beings. Fanon's "zone of non-being" will be discussed, as a space of extreme violence that negates individuals' subjectivity and dehumanizes them. The colonial world is explicitly described in terms of lack of potential and the inability to express and even define oneself. Pluralistic power becomes impossible as long as colonisers and colonised are isolated in a Manichean distinction of good and evil. The second section explores this idea further by problematising dialectical relations in Fanon's work on violence. In the context of domination and non-recognition, it is shown that Fanon locates dialectical contradiction within the subject and emphasises the violence of such internal struggle. This will explain why Fanon proposes the externalisation of

this violence as a response to domination. Fanon's approach to dialectics will be discussed as one of evolution and creative change, instead of a teleological one, and it will be shown how his suggested response to colonial violence is the creation of new subjects and a new humanism. The spontaneous expression of subjectivity is how Fanon approaches human potential in his work, while potential also extends to building a new post-colonial community. Finally, the third section will discuss Fanon's views on violence in this context of creative revolutionary action and solidarity. I will approach violence in Fanon by differentiating between colonial violence that functions as negation of the colonised, and the revolutionary struggle as a process of creating new subjectivities. This will hopeful show that Fanon understood decolonisation as an ongoing creative process, much larger and more important than violent struggle and revenge, which in any case contradicts Fanon's values of solidarity and humanism.

Colonial reality as a zone of non-being

'There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinary sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential from which a genuine new departure can emerge' (Fanon, 2007, p. xii). One of the most frequently quoted passages from Fanon's work, this one eloquently describes colonial reality in a manner that reveals the extent and nature of violence in colonial society. The Black person finds herself imprisoned in a social space where even subjective existence is negated, let alone freedom of genuine political action. The expression Fanon has chosen leaves no doubt that the colonial space is one permeated by absolute violence; hence, the poles of total domination and submission are clearly discernible. Speaking from the position of the submissive colonised Fanon explains how 'the white gaze, the only valid one, is already dissecting me. I am fixed' (ibid, p.95). At the same time, on the side of the dominant colonizer, 'the white man is locked in his whiteness' (ibid, p. xiv). Beyond the almost lyrical element in

Fanon's description, the violence of the zone of non-being remains fairly tangible and cannot be romanticized. 'The very first encounter of the colonized and the colonizer was marked by violence, and their exploitative relationship has always been defined by violence, or as Fanon says, 'was carried out by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons' (Fanon, 1963, p.36). Nevertheless, Fanon's work aims to uncover violence not merely as a political instrument, more or less often employed by opposing sides, but as an element that infests social and political reality and operates according to a logic of negation.

From the creation of the colonial space, 'the settler brings the native into existence' and perpetuates this fixed existence through domination (Fanon, 1963, p.36). The relationship between the White and the Black can be translated into conditions of aggressiveness and passivity (Fanon, 2007, p. xvi) which can be found not only as opposites in the Self/Other relationship, but also coexist as a contradiction internal to the subject. In a sense, the coexistence of aggressiveness and passivity instilled in both parts of the relationship, becomes a paradox where the one cancels the other and perpetuates an empty, sterile situation out of which neither side can escape, nor can become whole or progress. The zone of nonbeing becomes destiny for the Black, but at the same time, it can be argued that the White settler allows herself to exist only within the limits of her own discourse, also stripped of potential. The vicious circle Fanon discusses is one of superiority and inferiority relations that seem to have locked Blacks and Whites within it, negating to both of them 'the universalism inherent in the human condition' (ibid, p. xiv). Without essentializing human nature, it becomes evident how human potential, in all its fluidity, is being restricted by a fixed destiny that this vicious circle dictates. This reveals how colonial violence is absolute and ontologically omnipresent, hence cutting across all relations and all aspects of the human condition.

Despite all the striking differences between Arendt's and Fanon's thought on violence, one cannot miss both sides' claim on the function and consequences of violence, especially in its extreme, all-encompassing form. Following Arendt's thought on violence on the first chapter, totalitarian violence has been described as a rigid condition which destroys politics and incapacitates society by breaking down all speech and communication among subjects, thus obstructing all potential for novel action. The isolated individual remains alienated and unable to fulfil the most important desire of the human condition, namely to join one's peers in constructing a common understanding of the world. Both those who employ violence and those who are dominated by it cannot enjoy freedom, which is only possible through action and participation. This has also been supported by Albert Camus in the previous chapter. This position is strikingly similar to what Fanon says about the reality of colonial domination and violence.

The colonized is not a subject but a product of the colonial culture, a hegemonic system that operates in a Manichaean logic of race. However, for Fanon, colonialism is not a clear ideological system, not a "thinking machine", but rather "naked violence" in its natural state (Fanon, 1963, p.23). This "natural type" of domination is physical both in terms of the land and the colonial body; there is no nation and subjects, only territory and natives. In this context, this Manichaean logic is not an ideology in operation, but a totalizing logic that separates humans into "good" and "evil", Black and White. Fanon explicitly argues that 'the settler-native relationship is a mass relationship' (ibid, p.53). This definitely echoes Arendt's views on totalitarianism as absolute violence that permeates all levels of society and fixes them under its brutal and simplified rule. Both thinkers in their reflections on violence seem to be concerned with the dehumanization and reduction of a political subject to bare biological life, and the petrification of society and individuals within a space saturated by absolute violence.

Fanon himself explicitly refers to 'the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation [according to which] the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of Evil' (ibid, p.6). This does not mean that the Manichaean opposites translate into solid categories of qualities and values. Similar to Arendt's claims that totalitarianism has no law and principles apart from the value of the end of history as served by the 'Mass Man', Fanon claims that the native, in the context of colonial history, represents not only an absence of values, but a negation of them. As Manichaeism reaches its logical conclusion, it dehumanizes the native and turns her into an animal (ibid). The violence of dehumanization represents the ultimate kind of negation, which prevents the individual from being a political subject, and consequently condemns her to remain locked in the zone of non-being. In Arendtian terms this would mean a restriction into a status of biological life, *zoe*, outside the political space for *bios*, and in complete absence of freedom. In other words, the zone of non-being can be thought of as the colonial sphere of violence in which political life is paralysed, and the alienated Black stands "naked" and "non-existent" (Fanon, 2007, p.59).

Three main concepts seem to bring Fanon and Arendt close to their understanding of violence as a lack of subjectivity and freedom: action, reality and truth. To begin with, Fanon sees in the colonised human 'the fear of showing oneself as one actually is' (ibid). The risk that Arendt deems worth taking, that of exposing oneself to peers through speech and action, is not an option for the colonized. In the colonial world, exactly like individuals in the totalitarian world, 'the native is always presumed guilty' (Fanon, 1963, p.53). The colonised internalises the guilt of not being White and, being locked in the biology of skin colour, remains silent. The lack of speech explains partially the nakedness of the colonial subject who misses the most important quality required for belonging in the world. In the case of the colonial world, this is both literal

and metaphorical. The colonized is fixed, not even in the native language, but in the language of the colonizer, and still this language serves to express only "White thought" in speech. The conceptualisation of power in Fanon coincides with Arendt's here: 'a man who possesses a language possesses as an indirect consequence the world expressed and implied by this language […] there is an extraordinary power in the possession of a language' (Fanon, 2007, p.2). Speech is the main path to achieving a place in the world, as it has been shaped by collective human experience, and it coincides with political action.

As in any space saturated in violence, political action is restricted in the colonial sphere. If the Black cannot speak, it becomes impossible to act. The Black human may desire Whiteness, yet the White does not trust the Black; domination needs to be total and no initiative can be granted to the irrational, unpredictable dehumanized native. Racism is a tangible kind of discrimination in the biological sense, because the Black human is attacked at the corporeal level: it is the actual being that is dangerous and Black phobia is in essence fear of the biological; the Black human is reduced to 'nothing more than the biological' (ibid, p.143). Shaped and fixed entirely by external factors, the dehumanized Black can only attempt to reproduce and imitate the settler's discourse without contributing any new input, exactly because of this reduction to the biological, the status of the *animal laborans*. This is the instance in which the path to subjectivity gets obstructed. There is not merely negation of what the Black says, but negation of the Black being and the ability to speak as human in the first place. As a result of the negation of subjectivity and the human status, the Black ego remains trapped and as Fanon claims, the Black stops behaving as an actional person; actions are only destined for the Other (ibid). In other words, instead of action, there is merely a reaction to the White Other.

Reaction is problematic when it always follows the action of the Other instead of taking initiative. The Black human is restricted to the side of Evil, in the sphere of negation, and is not allowed to have an affirmative and creative role in action. This is what destroys the Black subject in both political and psychological terms. Fanon points at Nietzsche when he observes that 'Man's behavior is not only reactional. And there is always resentment in reaction' (ibid, p.197). The term *ressentiment* has been broadly linked to psychological degeneration of the subject. Nietzsche engaged with *ressentiment* in the search of creation of new, life-affirming values, which do not negate the value of life and do not seek merit in enduring hardship. Therefore, Nietzsche used *ressentiment* in the context of his master and slave morality, as a synonym for guilt that justifies weakness as moral superiority and locates the cause of suffering within the subject (Naicker, 2019). Fanon suggested that the colonized should try to have themselves recognized and not abandon themselves in the denial of recognition. After all, the postcolonial goal is not to gain admission in a closed system of values but, on the opposite, to engage in the setting of Black values.

The obstruction of speech and political action has direct consequences on the social space, preventing it from becoming political *par excellence*, that is to be a pluralistically shared world. Gibson (1999) suggests that Fanon diagnoses the 'absence of ideology' in colonialism in terms of an absence of social vision produced by lived experience. It can be logically argued that there can be no ideological subject if there is absence of a subject in the first place. The colonized have no system of ideas but remain constrained within the totalizing ideology of the colonial regime. In a society torn in two, the colonized have not replaced the dominant colonial reality with their own. Their only way is to negate existing reality and live rootless and estranged. The only comfort in such circumstances comes from tying oneself to old myths and traditions in order to gain a certain identity and create an anchor with the past. Fanon explains

what Western eyes perceive as native mysticism and superstition: ‘By entangling myself in this inextricable network where actions are repeated with crystalline inevitability, I find the everlasting world which belongs to me, and the perenniality which is thereby affirmed of the world belonging to us’ (Fanon, 1963, p. 55). Nevertheless, the repetition of action, is not the same as action for a new beginning. This is what Ficek (2011) means by petrification, the process of turning the dynamic into static, which imprisons action in an effort to retrieve a lost tradition of the past, instead of striving for the novel. To negate colonial reality and retreat to tradition is the only possible alternative within a system of violent negation but it traps the colonized in the very same logic that enslaves them.

This links to a key element that brings Fanon close to Arendt and Camus: the preoccupation with the human condition and the impact of violence on it. Sekyi-Otu (2011, p. 51) discusses Fanon’s work as going beyond a mere exploration of racial discrimination and placing emphasis on the wider human predicament of showing ‘contempt for the principle of connectedness’. Fanon and Arendt share a concern for domination that prevents individuals from pursuing self-realisation and a place among others. Gordon (2011, p. 89) explains that, in Fanon’s work, ‘maturity is fundamental to the human condition, but one cannot achieve maturity without being actional, which, for Fanon, is tantamount to freedom’. Therefore, both Arendt and Fanon consider freedom to be the outcome of fulfilling the human condition of action. In parallel with Camus’s work, Fanon’s diagnosis of colonialism reveals an ‘existential deviation’ (Fanon, 2007, p. xviii) of the Black human, which cannot be alleviated without considering the shaping of subjectivity and the creation of new values and even a new humanity. In this context, Fanon’s theory of decolonization ‘ceases to be strictly and restrictively anticolonialist’ (Sekyi-Otu. 2011, p.55). Decolonization is not simply a matter of reclaiming a stolen past and securing rights in the form of restoring justice based on an us vs.

them schema. Decolonization is primarily a resumption of interrupted history in the form of continuous dialogues and disputation within ourselves and with one another (ibid). In a sense, Fanonian decolonization is the elimination of the obstacles of domination that prevent power (often seen as dialectical) relations from resulting to recognition.

Before proceeding to explore this in the next section, it is important to see how two well-known postcolonial thinkers, Aimé Césaire and Edward Said, confirm Fanon's description of colonialism as well as the violence against the colonised. It is crucial that both thinkers' engagement with colonialism is based on the primacy of creative action and new beginnings in order to reverse the effects of dehumanization and alienation that colonial domination generates. Furthermore, both thinkers were concerned with the conditions, power and effects of colonialism, which necessarily involved questions of humanism.

Césaire's influence on Fanon is undeniable, especially in Black Skin White Masks, where Césaire is often praised for his call to the Black human to gain back the pride and trust in oneself that colonialism denies. What is more, the two thinkers share an understanding of how colonial society functions, and its pathologies. For example, Césaire is explicit on how colonization dehumanizes even the most civilized man:

> [colonialism] which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other person as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal (Césaire, 2001, p.41).

This signifies a close agreement with Fanon on how colonial violence is not just a form of oppression of the colonized but mostly a social system wholly permeated by violence, which destroys all genuine forms of political communication by dehumanizing colonized and colonizers alike: 'colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true

sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism' (Césaire, 2001, p.35).

Césaire and Fanon do not agree only on their approach to colonial pathologies but also on their suggested solutions. Césaire like Fanon calls for creative action as a response to dehumanization and alienation, and in this context the idea of a new humanism emerges. Césaire's vision consists of the (re)creation of a universal being trough a revolutionary call for a new beginning and the promise of political renewal that destroys old forms of oppression, not only by acting but, at a first level, by thinking differently (Hiddleston, 2014). This appeal for the construction of a universal being has also been seen as a point of tension between Fanon and Cèsaire. Bernasconi (2002) expresses this tension as Fanon's objection to Cèsaire arguably renouncing the future for the past and anchoring himself to a mystical past, which eventually turns the Black into a prisoner of a racialised body. According to this, while Fanon appreciates the effort to reconfirm and celebrate one's Blackness, he is aware of the hidden danger of remaining trapped in history instead of engaging in action, when universality becomes a question of roots and transformation. However, it is problematic to overemphasize such tension when Césaire himself has stated:

> We are not men for whom it is a question of "either-or." For us, the problem is not to make a utopian and sterile attempt to repeat the past, but to go beyond. It is not a dead society that we want to revive. We leave that to those who go in for exoticism. Nor is it the present colonial society that we wish to prolong, the most putrid carrion that ever rotted under the sun. It is a new society that we must create (Césaire, 2001, p. 52).

Therefore, both Césaire and Fanon aim at creating a new human, and consequently a new humanism, as a response to colonial restrictions. Furthermore, this humanism is to be created through action in solidarity and this requires a redefinition of ethics. In Cèsaire, the new humanism moves beyond a Heideggerian notion of humanity as collective existence–where relations of others are part of what constitutes being– to Levinas's idea of humanity that implies

a dependence upon and responsibility for the Other (Hiddleston, 2014). This gives rise to an ethical obligation necessary for a new humanism in which ethical recognition is not based on sameness but on difference. It also allows for a conceptualisation of humanism that does not obscure power relations but actively promotes those which build on difference and plurality over those which result in rigid relations of domination. For Césaire then, humanity must be constantly recreated, as a new beginning, in the sense of *une naissance* (Hiddleston, 2014, p. 98). The connection to Arendt's concept of natality should not be seen as accidental here. What this thesis has attempted to reveal this far is exactly a concurrence of thinkers who invest in pluralistic power relations with the aim of creating change through novel action in order to avoid the vicious circle of violent domination.

In the same spirit, Edward Said confronted colonial reality inspired mainly by Fanon and Foucault. Said examined Western domination through the lens of Orientalism, which he understood as 'a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the "Orient" and the "Occident"' (Said, 2003, p. 2). The Manichaean element that Fanon emphasizes in colonial logic as well as his interest on how colonialism shapes experience and knowledge are prominent in Said's theory of Orientalism. Said also defined Orientalism as a European invention, which at the same time helped to define Europe, hence confirming that domination impacts simultaneously on both parts of the relationship (ibid, p. 1). The Western gaze not only fixes the Orient but traps itself in a fixation of opposites, therefore remains unable to renew itself. Because of this, Western thought and values negate themselves and the civilizational mission exposes its hypocrisy. The principles of universality and humanism are self-defeating by excluding the Other from this equation and eventually become sterile. One example is Tocqueville's writings on colonialism in Algeria and his failure to defend his Western liberal principles without turning a blind eye to colonial injustice.

Tocqueville's concern regarding colonial violence in Algeria had more to do with his disquiet about harming the metropole's already decaying principles and less with an actual criticism against those practices that put Western ethics in danger (Welch, 2003). But, as discussed previously in Arendtian terms, violence does not only harm the victim but destroys all power, including the power of those who employ violent instruments. In addition, Orientalism does not only have one face, but it acts as absolute domination, which permeates society at all levels under a totalitarian logic. This becomes clear by Said's full definition of Orientalism as:

> a corporate institution dealing with the Orient–dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Said, 2003, p. 3).

The Foucauldian influence is evident in this definition that places the critique of Orientalism in terms of discourse and examines it through the lenses of power relations and institutional domination. Accordingly, Orientalist discourses are not to be seen simply as a structure of lies that can collapse by exposing it to a pre-existing fundamental truth, but as a monopoly of constructing social reality 'exclusively upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an oriental world emerged' (ibid, p. 8). As a product of such discourses, real effects of power emerge, despite the fact that this reality is inaccurate and distorted. Therefore, there is an inability to recover past truths from the sphere of tradition and to produce competitive truth claims within the current system. At the same time, reality has been framed not in the sense of a shared world but as a vivid image that depicts colonial discourse as real.

Foucauldian thought appears to have a prominent role in Said's preoccupation with truth and knowledge. When Said says that Orientalism is not a structure of lies or myths, it is because of its unmatchable power which becomes tangible in the form institutions, socio-economic consequences, but more importantly, as teachable wisdom–knowledge (Said, 2003, p. 6).

Western power over the Orient is then taken for granted and acquires the status of scientific truth (ibid, p. 46), often supported by biological "truths", (ibid, p. 233) and functions as "learned judgement" (ibid, p. 67). This is not to suggest that Said considers Orientalist discourse to be factually correct but that discourses have the power to determine reality unilaterally. Said does explain that what cultural discourses circulate is not "truth" but representations; 'there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a re-presence, or a representation' (ibid, p. 21). These representations show themselves as truthful by displacing and excluding any alternative reality of the Orient and gain strength by being applied to the behaviour of Orientals in the real world (ibid, p. 69). By placing the essentialist straightjacket on the Orient, one can be convinced that, for example, Arab societies emerged and developed with an economy based on raiding and therefore are inherently violent, as opposed, of course, to the West. A question that emerges is whether the native can escape such fixation and in what ways. Fanon does discuss the problem of truth in colonialism in a relevant manner:

> The native replies to the living lie of the colonial situation by an equal falsehood. His dealings with his fellow-nationals are open; they are strained and incomprehensible with regard to the settlers […] In this colonialist context there is no truthful behaviour: and the good is quite simply that which is evil for "them" (Fanon, 1963, p. 50).

This is what explains the fact that Black action is first a reaction (Fanon, 2007, p. 19). When colonial power has the first say that fixes the colonized in a particular manner and imposes a corresponding reality, the second say, that of the colonized, will be a reaction to it because of the reality in which it is enclosed. The colonized cannot compete over truth with the colonizer, therefore, it is not possible to successfully destroy powerful colonial discourses where falsehood is the only possible line of communication. The remaining option is to resist and fight the product of such discourses, which is violence; however, this means that the resistance of the colonized becomes a living proof of the discourse: the colonized is violent. The pre-colonial past has been framed as violent, the colonial present is violent, and consequently there

is no hope in re-negotiating old truths in order to fight the existing ones. In other words, it is not surprising that in a world permeated by colonial reality the bias of the Western mind decides to place emphasis on the "violent response" of Fanon and his sympathizers instead of the violent statement made by colonialism: the discourse already explains that colonized and violence belong together, so violent resistance is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

This can raise suspicions on how novel and authentic Fanon's recipe for genuine decolonization is: if violence is already everywhere what new can it bring? There is also the question of whether the native is actually passive and dominated, or violent–because this is what the discourse suggests and because colonial reality is saturated by violence. Regarding passivity, for Said, colonization and imperialism were not a case of active Western intrusion against the inert native, but there was always some form of resistance (Said, 2014, p. xii). Initially, this can be read as a deviation from Fanon's emphasis on the "petrification" and inaction of the colonized. Nevertheless, it can be suggested that because, as claimed here, Fanon focuses on action, cases of resistance can signify a mere reaction to the colonizer and do not constitute proper action in political response, which seems to be the concern of both Fanon and Said.

Said places emphasis on how the "civilizational mission" had to be accompanied with violence to meet instances of rebellion. This violence was justified on the premise that "they" only understand force and violence, because "they" are not like "us", therefore, they deserve to be ruled. (Said, 2014, p. xii). The contradictory logic of colonialism is then revealed: it engages in violent domination while claiming that it acts rationally towards a supposedly violent Other. This brings Fanon and Said even closer; the colonized is fixed into a position of violent reaction, being deprived of all rationality and the potential for new action. Within this context,

all resistance remains futile both by being violently crushed and by not allowing the colonized the necessary political space to engage in creative resistance and exit the violent vicious circle of colonial reality.

Nevertheless, using the prevailing currency of violence to shape a response is not necessarily co-opting resistance to further domination. Just because everything has been contaminated with violence, it does not mean that domination cannot be dismantled in the process. Interestingly, Said's work is also deeply engaged with the idea of beginnings and, not unlike Arendt's natality, his approach has less to do with a strict point of origin and more with action and creativity. For Said, the term "beginning" is more active compared to the passive "origin" and it is basically an activity which 'implies return and repetition rather than linear accomplishment', while its main function is to create difference (Massad, 2010 p. 29). In other words, it is action that matters for the initiation of beginnings–and novelty comes partially as a consequence–and it does so in the context of worldliness and the creation of meaning. Indeed, Said is specifically concerned with the meaning produced as a result of a given beginning, exactly because beginnings as events are paradoxically not confined to the beginning, which for Said signals a major shift in perspective and knowledge (Said, 1998). Applying this idea to the context of anti-colonial struggle means that the colonized can still exit the zone of non-being by beginning to act, rather than merely re-acting. The fact that violence is omnipresent in the battlefield of such struggle does not necessarily imply that the struggle cannot gain its own dynamic and derail from the original context of domination. By acting as such, the colonized can engage in the creation of new meaning, without the need to retrieve dormant truths from their pre-colonial past to counter colonial discourse. In a sense, this would mark what Said saw as 'beginnings in the absence of origins' (Hussein, 2004, p. 74).

Disassociating beginnings–and action in general–from reaction also implies a danger posed to the subject that has to do with the use of violent resistance to construct a fixed identity in opposition to dominant discourses. For both Fanon and Said decolonization that succumbs to petty parochialism and separatist national identity cannot signify the end of domination as long as it cannot allow for a continuous chance to (re)negotiate the shaping of subjectivities, which for Said became evident after the dichotomy between Europe and Colony gave its place to that of North/South, development and underdevelopment (Dallmayr, 1997). In that case, there is no case for genuine liberation of the subject but rather a continuation of violent domination in different terms. Since Fanon conceptualised freedom of the subject in terms of the confrontation between the Self and the Other, it becomes necessary to discuss his take on violent struggle for subjectivity in terms of dialectics, which anyway play a pivotal role in his allegedly violent-praising Wretched of the Earth.

Violence in Fanonian dialectics: Ontologically (un)necessary?

This part aims to approach violence in Fanon's work through a problematization of dialectics. While Fanon's views on violence are mainly read through the *Wretched of the Earth*, which concerns the phase of the armed struggle of liberation from colonial domination, his discussion in *Black Skin White Masks* is clearly an approach to violence from a dialectical point of view. Fanon's approach has a psychological outlook but relates to questions of domination, colonial violence and its effects on colonized subjectivities. Without grasping Fanon's views on violence in this first work of his, it becomes harder to differentiate between the creative force of resistance and the physical violence of armed struggle in the *Wretched of the Earth*. This differentiation is important for not reducing Fanon to a blood-thirsty revolutionary who simply praises violence.

There is a whole chapter titled “The Black Man and Hegel” in *Black Skin White Masks*, so there is hardly a need to argue over whether Fanon has been influenced by Hegelian dialectics. Already in the beginning of the book Fanon expresses the problem: “The White man is locked in his Whiteness”; “the Black man in his Blackness”; “How can we break the cycle?” (Fanon, 2007, p. xiv). Hegel’s dialectic of lordship and bondage was meant to deliver mutual recognition, but Fanon found himself in front of an impasse of domination and non-recognition that he wished to break. The purpose of this analysis is to suggest how Hegelian dialectics influenced Fanon, to show how he attempted to resolve flaws in the dialectical process, and to explain why his approach reveals a dialectical trap of seeing violence and domination as ontologically necessary.

The approach to dialectics that has been mostly used and cited from Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* is his discussion of self-consciousness and specifically the piece on “Independence and Dependence of Self-consciousness: Lordship and Bondage” (Hegel, 1977). Hegel opens up this piece by stating that ‘Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged’ (ibid, p. 111). In confronting the Other, the subject sees itself in the Other and needs to assimilate both the Other and itself, so that it will achieve certainty of itself by cancelling otherness, and it will return the otherness to the other self-consciousness, hence allowing for freedom. This process is defined as ‘a movement of Self-consciousness in relation to another Self-consciousness’ (ibid) and it is a double movement, occurring for both sides and establishing the process of recognition. The importance of this lies in the fact that it describes an instance of genuine action, that of the subjects who become means (the middle terms) to manage to unite with themselves in a reciprocal process and gain both certainty and truth of their existence. Before this process takes place, the subject as self-consciousness is a plain being and, for the Other, a

negatively characterised object. ‘Each is indeed certain of its own self, but not of the Other, and therefore its own self-certainty still has no truth’ (ibid, p. 113). This resonates so far with Fanon’s description of the lack of truth and action in the colonial sphere, in which the process of recognition has failed. It is, however, the master/slave dialectic which complicates Fanon’s theory of violence and the creation of the subject because, as it will be shown here, this dialectic is developed in a de facto state of domination.

According to Hegel, the meeting self-consciousnesses:

> Since to begin with they are unequal and opposed, and their reflection into a unity has not yet being achieved, they exist as two opposed shapes of consciousnesses; one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another. The former is the lord, the other is bondsman (Hegel, 1977, p. 115).

As Fanon has described, the colonizer exists independently in the colonial sphere, while the colonized lives as a simple life-being in the zone of non-being. Hegel already interprets power relations as an unequal state of domination. The master is already recognised and enjoys both recognition and the object of desire, that is the slave. The slave stands for ‘sheer negative power’ whose action is ‘impure and unessential’, while the master ‘is the pure essential action in this relationship’ (ibid, p. 116). Therefore, the outcome of recognition is one-sided and unequal. The process only moves and becomes completed because of two experiences– necessarily complementary ones– that shape the slave into self-consciousness. The first is work because through desire and negation of the working object, which is independent, the worker/slave eventually sees its own independence by being exposed to the real world of existence. The second is fear, which according to Hegel it needs to be absolute fear so that the slave can identify as a negative being with the negativity of the object, instead of seeing it as something external (ibid, p. 119).

The centrality of fear can be of paramount importance in approaching Fanon's thought here. Hegel explains not only that the slave's consciousness has been shaken with dread because of experiencing the fear of death, but also that 'the fear of the lord is indeed the beginning of wisdom' (ibid, p. 117). If for Hegel gaining recognition presupposes a real struggle and that a consciousness risks its life, then fear and self-preservation keep the slave under domination. The slave does not revolt so that life will be spared, but this implies that once life is risked and the slave is exposed to absolute fear, the path to recognition opens. Perhaps this enlightened Fanon into concluding that the only way out of the colonial prison is for the colonized to give into the absolute violence and fear of colonial reality and risk everything to have oneself recognised. The Hegelian prescription demands that it is 'only through staking one's life that freedom is won' (ibid, p. 114) and that the slave must become "infected" with fear through and through in its very substance (ibid, p. 119). Consequently, the Fanonian medicine is to allow the colonized to immerse oneself in colonial violence and become fully infected by it (although in this sense clearly not initiating it) to win freedom. This explains why violent struggle appears to be so essential in the process of liberation. Hegel clearly explains that no recognition is to be provided by the master, but it is fear and risk that can generate it. To simply neutralize this struggle and provide the Black with a superficial sense of freedom only re-affirms the existential prison. Fanon warns that 'any unilateral liberation is flawed' (Fanon, 2007, p. xv, see also p. 191). Ciccariello-Maher (2011, p. 35) explains this concisely:

> Equality is something to be won**,** not something to be practiced, and to insist on the latter is to lose sight of how it is that equality functions in the first place: it is not ontological, but itself a practice of power. Purportedly, ontological equality has already been divided by racialization as exclusion from Being, and for Fanon, access to the reciprocity of equality can only be gained through dialectical struggle (Ciccariello-Maher, 2011, p. 35).

Thus, the problem remained for Fanon, that Hegel's "promise" for an eventual reciprocal recognition was not fulfilled. The abolition of slavery established neither the letter nor the spirit

of the law, therefore, domination remained: 'The Black man is a slave who was allowed to assume a master's attitude. The White man is a master who allowed his slaves to eat at his table' (Fanon, 2007, p. 194). Fanon tried to locate the obstacle which prevented the dialectical machine from working and found it within the slave. This seems consistent with Hegel, whose dialectic concerns the movement and fulfilment of self-consciousness and, therefore, is primarily internal, as is the struggle and contradictions involved. Nevertheless, more than often, the master/slave dialectic is seen as primarily an external contradiction between the master and the slave. The fact that this dialectical process is triggered by facing the Other and it results in recognition of two consciousness does not change the fact that the freedom produced is internal to the subject and it occurs through inner contradictions as a movement from one thought to the other to produce a state of higher self-consciousness.

This does not mean that the thesis/antithesis/synthesis model, as inspired from Hegel cannot be applied to systems and concepts. Taking the example of capitalism, the logic of this system progresses in clash with its internal contradictions, eventually transforming into a higher system. But it would be problematic to simplify dialectics and suggest that there is a bourgeois thesis negated by a proletarian antithesis that eventually brings radical change, unless perhaps "bourgeois" and "proletarian" are concepts which stand for capitalist notions and not actual subjects. In the case of colonialism, Fanon's understanding of dialectics in Black Skin White Masks suggests a focus on the inner struggle of the colonized from a psychological perspective. Indeed, Fanon (2007, p. xiiv) explicitly states his focus on 'unhappy consciousnesses that get tangled up in their contradictions'. Therefore, the struggle Fanon describes is not, at least here, between the White colonizer's thesis and the Black native's antithesis, which will eventually give rise to a new humanity. Instead, the struggle is between the White image that the Black tries in vain to absorb, while the very Black experience manifests its contradiction.

In practice, Fanon uses the dialectic to express colonial Manichaeism in a more creative manner and frame it in in terms of experience to solve the problem of recognition. It is what Gibson (1999, p. 340) means by the 'unstable, critical, and creative moment of negativity' which dissolves the static and inert Manichaeism. Fanon sees revolutionary struggle as crucial in inverting Manichaean fixations because the colonized must learn how to shed their inferiority complex and alienation through praxis (Jameson, 2010, p. 351). In this sense, the dialectic is a therapeutic and liberating act of violence, which through action unfreezes and sets in motion the process of recognition. It is necessary to note here that action in the Arendtian sense is found in Fanon's work in the process of building solidarity with the fellow revolutionaries and in building a new society, discussed in the next section. For now, what is meant by dialectical praxis is the process of critical thought and experience which occurs within the subject. In other words, it is the decision to re-enter the field of action in order to demand and achieve recognition.

It is worth insisting a bit further on experience and dialectics to reveal the importance of creativity and novelty of resistance in Fanon's work. Sekyi-Otu (1996, p. 26) also proposes a view of Fanon's dialectics as the movement of self-consciousness, which he chooses to call the dialectic of experience because the relations involved are 'infinitely more complex' than what a simplistic colonizer-colonized opposition suggests; because 'it testifies to the dissolution of "the two metaphysics" of absolute difference'; and because 'this movement of experience consists in a "progressive enlightening of consciousness". Many scholars have given their own interpretation of the dialectics of colonialism in Fanon in the sense of experience. The idea of the transformation of the subject can be interpreted in various contexts, as long as these remain faithful to Fanon's insistence for the creation of the new, through a struggle with the existing.

For example, Lane (2006, p. 33) explains how the experience of alienation in colonial culture meets with the experience of an opposing but equally alienating pre-colonial tradition. The presence of both remains meaningless, but the clash between them creates a new cultural context based on the new experience acquired through struggle. However, the extent to which Fanon embraces negativity, or stands sceptical towards it, has been the topic of many debates, especially in the context of his intellectual affinity with Sartre.

Given the authorship of the preface in the *Wretched of the Earth*, the influence of Sartre remains central in the discussion of Fanon's work. Sartre's main interest in dialectics concerned history and, especially in his *Critique of dialectical reason*, the quest was for discovering whether dialectics could make possible the comprehension of history of the social and historical totality (Poster, 1977, p. 273). In these efforts, Sartre tried to overcome his earlier individualism and proclaimed that a human being must be able to make 'the leap from his own singular life to History' (ibid, p. 276). Therefore, Sartre's interest in human action rests upon the link between action and totality through the movement of history, which has the tendency to eventually connect all individual actions into a single totalization. This already distances Sartre from Fanon, who engaged with dialectics to resolve the lack of recognition in the racialised subject. Fanon does not seem to aspire to the totalization of action but rather to establishing the Self among others in a harmonious combination of action, in an Arendtian sense and in the form of a community of recognition. Fanon's dialectic is 'an evolution and not an endpoint' (Hiddleston, 2010, p. 51). The dialectic is a process that may remain unfinished, as long the subject is freed from internal conflict, in which the dialectic can become external again in its original sense, that of investigating and negotiating the truth of multiple sides without the burden of domination.

Sartre was aware that dialectics refer to the conflict between two attitudes within, as in being-for others, and not conflict with others, as often interpreted using the dyad of the master and the slave (Sze, 2009, p. 5). However, Sartre already slips towards the external with his fascination with the concept of the gaze. While Fanon was interested in the internal struggle of one who is already externally fixed, and in how this can be resolved, Sartre still personified this fixation in the gaze of the Other. This leads him to see "hell in other people" and not in the domination that comes as a result of Otherness. For Fanon the hell of the zone of non-being is the inner sense of alienation from the Self and the experience of domination, while for Sartre hell comes from the outside. Sartre (cited in Memmi, 2003, p. 21) himself claims on another preface that "there are neither good nor bad colonists", something that could echo Fanon's insistence on colonialism and Whiteness as a construct, and less on a demonization of the White Other. After all, Fanon appreciated the effects of the colonial system on colonizers and colonized alike. But Sartre added:

> there are colonialists. Among these, some reject their objective reality. Borne along by the colonial apparatus, they do every day in reality what they condemn in fantasy, for all their actions contribute in the maintenance of oppression (ibid).

Without suggesting that the reproduction of domination is not to be criticized, and without an effort to mystify oppression, we can read between these lines a difference between Fanon and Sartre at least in this context. In fact, one can uncover several inconsistencies between Sartre's take on dialectics and his engagement with Fanon's work. For example, while in the preface of the *Wretched of the Earth* Sartre justifies violence by praising its restorative effect, this comes as a contradiction to previous claims in his work that 'violence does not know how to put things together' (Santori, 2003, p. 74). This does not imply that Sartre's take on Fanon's work is dishonest but reveals a certain tension between violence as restoring the subject to action and violence as a demand of recognition from the Other. It is perhaps that Sartre himself was fascinated by the dynamism of Fanon's work and the political project of liberating Algeria, so

that his preface on the *Wretched of the Earth* can be seen, behind its bold, assertive language, as a shy effort to re-adapt abstract dialectics to the dialectics of a concrete political and anti-colonial project.

Sartre's concern with violence is unsurprisingly an existentialist one and has located conflict in "being-for-Others". Unlike Hegel, the relationship between being-for-itself and the Other is reciprocal and it does not allow–at least in *Being and Nothingness*–for the possibility to overcome objectification, hence remains pessimistic and trapped in a circular existential impasse (Santori, 2003). The pessimism rests upon the fact that violence is seen as inherent in our ontological relation to the Other. This premise also ties freedom in a process of reciprocal recognition and at the same time negation, since 'the only conceivable violence is that of freedom against freedom' which makes violence 'a pure and simple constraint exercised deliberately by men on men' (ibid, p.33). Both Sartre and Fanon were trying to overcome jammed dialectics and non-recognitions, but the tragedy of Sartrean dialectics is his longing for freedom at the endpoint of the dialectic, when his approach to violence traps him in its circular motion.

Fanon's concern with violence is also an existentialist concern and it lies in the traumatic experience of 'being forced to look at himself from the outside' while failing to respond to objectification (Hiddleston, 2014, p. 29). The gaze here does not remain with the Other but works endoscopically. This violence is repeatedly described by Fanon as an "haemorrhage" and "amputation". But in Fanon's case violence is not ontologically mandatory in our relations with the Other but operates as internalised violence of external conditions of domination. 'As a colonial product, the colonized internalises the violence and anger and the negative energy becomes directed towards the Self; in that sense it is revolutionary to turn aggression back to

colonialism' (ibid, p. 36). It is necessary to emphasize that it is colonialism to which Fanon returns violence, and not the Other. Furthermore, the amputation mentioned is not one directly caused by the Other and it is not amputation merely "of the Self" but also "from the world" and, therefore, from others. Fanon himself explains:

> Disoriented, incapable of confronting the Other (…) I transported myself (…) far from myself and gave myself up as an object. What did this mean to me? Peeling, stripping my skin, causing a haemorrhage (…) I wanted quite simply to be a man among men. I would have liked to enter our world young and sleek, a world we could build together (Fanon, 2007, p. 92).

It becomes obvious that what Fanon describes is far more complex than a violent struggle between the Self and the Other. The line between the victim and the perpetrator of this haemorrhage is blurred and this is Fanon's rejection of Manichaeism. This is not to make the Black human an accomplice in violence but to insist upon the disastrous and self-destructive, anti-political effects violence has on humanity. This is arguably similar to Arendt's logic, when she opposed Manichaeism by replacing the monstrous Nazi with the banal Nazi and presented the Jewish martyr as part of the problem of domination (Lee, 2011). The trap of the dialectical logic, which renders the Black human a mere antithesis to Whiteness, produces 'nothing other than a long series of violent self-negations', through despising Blackness as it has been constructed by White supremacism (Rabaka, 2010, p. 66). As long as the Black subjectivity has not been consciously shaped, Blackness is a reaction to Whiteness. To live in a skin that has been created as a Manichaean negative is a violent experience; equally violent is the struggle to free oneself from this skin. The crucial difference is that the first experience remains within a logic of negation and reaction, while the second strives for a creative response through action.

This context sheds light to the enigmatic disagreement between Fanon and Sartre in the Wretched of the Earth, the same book in which Sartrean and Fanonian approaches seem to go

hand in hand. Sartre in *Black Orpheus* defined the dialectical terms of racism by locating a thesis in the existing affirmation of White supremacy, an antithesis in the assertion of negritude as a negation of White supremacy, and by setting a goal of synthesis into a future raceless society: negritude would only come into being with the purpose of being destroyed (Majumdar, 2007, p. 100). The Black human, however, needs time to cope with the internal struggle against the White image and to respond through negritude to free oneself. Sartre on the other hand is in a rush: the stage of negritude in the form of negation has to pass off, so that finally the progress to the universal will be achieved. Fanon replied bitterly:

> He reminded me that my negritude was nothing but a weak stage (…) I sensed my shoulders slipping from this world, and my feet no longer felt the caress of the ground. Without a black past, without a black future, it was impossible for me to live my blackness. Not yet white, no longer completely black, I was damned. Jean Paul Sartre forgets that the black man suffers in his body quite differently from the white man (Fanon, 2007, p. 117).

Fanon's Black wants to escape his position of slave in the painful dialectical process, a prison of denied recognition. The Black suffers inside and decides to initiate the internal struggle to freedom. Dialectical recognition has already proven itself frozen in relation to the Other, but Sartre has still hope: if only the Black becomes the means, the end can still be reached. But this process does not allow Blackness to become relevant end exit the zone of non-being. Fanon protests:

> The dialectic that introduces necessity as a support for my freedom expels me from myself. It shatters my impulsive position. Still regarding consciousness, black consciousness is immanent in itself. I am not a potentiality of something, I am fully what I am. I do not have to look for the universal. There is no room for probability inside me. My black consciousness does not claim to be a loss. It is. It merges with itself (Fanon, 2007, p. 114).

Fanon is after the unforeseeable, while Sartre succumbs to historical destiny. Sartre 'has destroyed black impulsiveness' (ibid). The unpredictable, as Arendt would probably say, is just getting in the way of the historical end, and those who set it as a goal see human action as a

means to that end; therefore, neither action, nor negritude, and consequently nor action that creates the meaning of negritude is an end in itself. In addition, Fanon disagrees–like Arendt would definitely do–with the intrusion of necessity in the process of action. Necessity alienates the subject and reduces it to mere being, while it is antithetical to the initiation of action because it kills spontaneity, one of action's most important conditions. Sartre's work is deeply preoccupied with necessity, and this is not irrelevant to his Marxist influences. After all, one of the most important themes in his work is scarcity, which *The Critique of Dialectical Reason* presents as both 'the driving force of history and the source of human praxis' (Carney, 2007, p. 102). Fanon responds: "I am not a loss, I do not have to look for the universal". This does not mean that Fanon denies the universal, but he sees it not as something that will be "looked for" and manipulatively brought into being. The universal will not come because of the struggle between affirmation and negation; it will rise once this struggle seizes to exist. Fanon turns back to Sartre who is after all a comrade, even though a White comrade who does not fully understand the Black suffering that he opposes:

> We can understand why Sartre sees in the black poet's Marxist stand the logical end to negritude. What is happening is this. Since I realize that the black man is the symbol of sin, I start hating the black man. But I realize that I am a black man. I have two ways of escaping the problem. Either I ask people not to pay attention to the colour of my skin; or else, on the contrary, I want people to notice it (…) In order to put an end to this neurotic situation (…) skim over this absurd drama that others have staged around me; rule out these two elements that are equally unacceptable; and through the particular, reach out for the universal (Fanon, 2007, p. 174).

The Black condition is existentially absurd in the same manner that life and death belong to the sphere of the absurd–in the Camusean sense– and give rise to existential angst when one tries to find meaning in them. The Black neurosis emerges when the Black tries to find inherent meaning in Whiteness and Blackness and blunt the contradiction. Both qualities are "staged" as Fanon says; they only serve to justify dominant values and practices and bring the Black to the contradictory conclusion "I am Black, therefore I am not". Camus suggests we stop trying

to ascribe a higher meaning to life and death, but experience life as it is in the form of abandoning oneself in action. Fanon suggests in turn to fully experience negritude and act spontaneously without trying to manipulate binaries to manufacture humanity; the Black human should be both a yes and a no, depending on the context of action. Fanon emphasized a dialectic by which one's response to any situation cannot be predetermined but depends on the conditions present and the means employed to establish the response based on one's reading of the situation (Bernasconi, 2012, p. 346). Fanon, Memmi, Camus, were thinkers who could transcend the limits of the situation experienced from a position of 'not entirely belonging nowhere'. Fanon was a Francophone from Martinique who identified himself with the Algerian struggle, Memmi was an Arab Jew in Tunisia and Camus, as seen in the previous chapter, was constantly renegotiating his identity as a French Algerian. The experience of an interrupted, unfixed identity necessarily makes one sceptical towards historical ends and ambitious answers.

This is perhaps why Fanon paints Sartre as dogmatic and paternalistic when he explains that 'there is nothing more disagreeable than to hear: "You'll change, my boy; I was like that too when I was young… You 'll see you'll get over it"' (2007, p. 114). For Sartre, as long as the dialectical vehicle has not reached the destination of its predetermined route, everybody is an Other; this includes Fanon, despite the fact that Sartre wishes to break free from that troubled relation. When, existentially speaking, Camus moves the justification of his rebellion from absurdity to solidarity, he keeps away from reconciliating contradictions, but also places limits to violence; even though quite differently, we all suffer from the absurd. Fanon's solidarity is meant to give rise to the new also through a struggle against colonial violence. Sartre's solidarity remains wishful because the "real" humanism has not been achieved yet and European humanism has proven itself hypocritical; violence is a solution itself and needs no

limits. But whose is this violence if not the established violence of colonialism, a violence which is a European-inspired instrument? Perhaps then Fanon's objection had something to do with Sartre's effort to predetermine the dialectical outcome in purely European terms, confirming that 'Sartre's totalization remains bound to Eurocentrism' (Ciccarriello-Maher, 2008, p. 137). For Fanon, the Black is what has been missing from the world, through racist violent amputation, and has to come back as a solution and not as part of a pre-existing solution.

The difficult question that arises then is whether dialectics can be helpful after all–and the follow up question is for whom. Sartre from his European Hegelian-Marxist chair tried to hit two birds with one dialectical stone. 'The secret of the proletariat, Marx once said, is that it bears within it the destruction of bourgeois society (…) the colonized likewise has his secret' (Sartre in Memmi, 2003, p. 25). Fanon's work (more in *the Wretched of the Earth* than in *Black Skin White Masks*) has undoubtedly many Marxist influences. But at least in the latter, and in the context of racism and dialectics, Fanon distances himself from Marx by promoting his psychological analysis of alienation and exploitation over the economic one (Hudis, 2017). Racism is seen as a system by Fanon and is examined as such, but not merely as a "system of thought" and not by abandoning the existentialist approach for a possibly more applicable Marxist approach (Bernasconi, 2012, p. 352). The notion of the system only serves the purpose of preventing the particular from obscuring the larger socio-political issues that frame subjective experience. Fanon shared Marxist concerns and accepted Marx's analysis of society, but had to proceed an elaborate further, as his primary aim was to find answers to the colonial phenomenon that Marxism could not provide (Rabaka, 2010, p. 203). But there is a strong chance that neither Marxist nor Hegelian dialectics can pose themselves as a theory that can liberate from racism, as long as they jump out–at least in their original version– of a European system of thought that has traditionally ontologised violence as a necessary evil.

Moreover, this necessary evil was not ontologised from a neutral position, but from a politicized position of domination. The part of the world that defined violence as ontological necessary was the part of the world that violently dominated the other parts. Especially, when dialectics engage with questions of mastery and slavery, the idea of inviting the non-European Other into sublation for the progress of history, sounds at least dubious. Gidwani (2008, p. 2579) is right to claim that the "subaltern" as 'that figure which resists or evades dialectical integration, haunts Hegel's philosophy of sublation'. Fanon was aware of that together with the realization that the Hegelian promise of eventual recognition was not extended to Blacks or the colonized. It is worth pointing out a few points of tension of Hegelian dialectics which bring out many interesting links between violence and recognition and show how Fanon's use of the dialectic tried to resolve them.

The lordship and bondage scheme present us with a desiring lord and an undesiring bondsman. It is unclear how desire has been detected here. On the one hand, the fact that the bondman is in bonds does not mean that there is lack of desire, but it would make sense to assume that domination silences desire. Nevertheless, it makes perfect sense to assume that a human in bonds desires first of all to rid of them more than anything else. Hegel's dialectic also implies that the bondsman neglects desire by placing a priority in securing survival; is this nothing less than one of the strongest types of desire, the desire to live? There is a clear bias in refusing to acknowledge the bondsman's desire. Perhaps, this is why Fanon (2007, p. xii) asks early on "What does the Black man want?" to answer his own question: "a Black is not a man". In the wake of being the bondsman, it is assumed that the dehumanized Black has no desires. This reveals the fact that the master/slave dialectic does not simply describe a relation of domination but tries to justify it on the very fact of this domination. In the colonized world, the native is

seen as idle and unwilling, but this is attributed to an intrinsic character and not the outcome of colonial rule. In drawing *The Portrait of the Colonized,* Memmi (2003, p.124) explains how racist stereotypes fix one as lazy by nature, making it pointless to try and prove otherwise. Interestingly, Memmi describes the trait of laziness in terms of inaction. Colonialism fixates the nature of the colonized who is therefore trapped into inaction. At the same time, the only action that remains available for the colonizer is the very act of fixation, that is domination. The richness of every day interaction is reduced to mastery and slavery, almost as dull as the theoretical image of Hegel's master and slave.

On the other hand, the logic of the dialectic suggests that the meeting point of the master and the slave manifests an urge to dominate and annihilate the Other. This is another assumption to be questioned, as it goes beyond the claim that opposite sides may exist and confront each other to argue that such confrontation necessarily implies a struggle for domination. This is the case of Sartre and his preoccupation with the Other's gaze, as discussed earlier. Redding (2008, p.105) suggests: 'If one could grasp that beyond the desired annihilation of the other's independence lies the desire for a universal, such as life itself, one could then grasp the possibility of there being alternate ways of realizing that desire'. This sounds interestingly similar to Camus's absurd rebellion as an alternative to both violence and a resolution of contradictions, and it was probably one of the main reasons Fanon tried to readjust dialectics. Fanon found himself in front of a dialectical formula already in place which emphasized the outcome of the dialectical synthesis in terms of recognition, instead of making a clear call against domination. However, even recognition proved to be impossible in the relationship between colonized and colonizer exactly because of the dialectic being partial to and benefiting the dominant side:

> The "native" sector is not complementary to the European sector. The two confront each other, but not in the service of a higher unity. Governed by a purely Aristotelian

> logic, they follow the dictates of mutual exclusion: There is no conciliation possible, one of them is superfluous (Fanon, 1963, p.38).

From this perspective, the Hegelian dialectic presents violence as ontologically necessary, and this violence is not a mere instrument in the context of life and death struggle, but a preconceived ontological element which decides the life and death of subjectivity. Following from this, it can be argued that Fanon did not see violence as an instrument either, at least not in the sense of mere imitation aiming at the reversal of the two poles which would bring Black domination over the Whites. Instead, as Aching (2013, p. 30) explains, the violent response serves the purpose of 'transcending the impasse of asymmetrical Manichaeism by violently levelling colonial hierarchies' or, in other words, seeks to transform distorted Manichaeism into "proper binary options". A dialectical field, already uneven from its conception, needs to be reshaped by bringing the slave in front of the master. Ogungbure (2018, p.217) takes this point further by accusing Hegelian dialectics of institutionalizing a racialised violence preserved in the fundamentally unequal concept of recognition and notes how '[in Fanon] the absence of reciprocity between the "master" (colonizer) and the Black "slave" (colonized) makes the Black "slave" focus his gaze on the "master" whereas the "slave" in the Hegelian dialectic focuses on the object of consciousness'. This is how Fanon politicizes Hegelian dialectics by shedding light both on the psychology of the slave and the domination of the master (also in Sekyi-Otu, 1996).

Regarding Hegel's institutionalisation of racist violent domination, the literature offers a useful insight to the question of taken-for-granted domination in Hegelian dialectics. Buck-Morss (2000) has situated historically Hegel's conception of the master/slave dialectic and revealed that Hegel, when he elaborated this dialectic in the context of the Haitian revolution, knew about real slaves revolting against their masters. This presents us with an understanding of the

master/slave dialectic that has been silenced by our insistence to take domination as given. From this point of view, what could Hegel mean by showing that the slave holds, at least partially, responsibility for the choice of life over liberty and that liberation cannot be "granted from above" but needs to be gained through a struggle of life and death? Buck-Morss (ibid. p.849) suggests that 'the goal of *this* liberation, *out* of slavery, cannot be subjugation of the master in turn, which would be merely to repeat the master's "existential impasse", but rather elimination of the institution of slavery altogether'. This could be the idea that helped Fanon shape his own take on Hegel's dialectics.

As already discussed, Fanon made a sharp differentiation between recognising one's rights and a more substantial recognition that subjects claim for themselves. It has been shown that the difference lies in creative action that the subject must undertake to be fully recognised. As Arendt has claimed, action brings individuals into life in the sense of bios where they find themselves free and equal among their peers. Fanon did not take the dynamics of Hegelian dialectics too literally but had the courage to tamper with them and distinguish between being a master and the illusion of a master's attitude. Fanon refuses to follow the logic of domination; he does not think that Blacks are not masters because they do not dominate others, but because they simply adopt White values instead of creating their own (Hogan, 2018, p.23). Going back to the point where Fanon brings up Nietzsche and *ressentement* it now becomes clearer why Fanon did not remain too faithful to the terms of the Hegelian dialectic.

Fanon considered that the master/slave distinction can generate dissatisfaction and resentment that would make people lose the ability to create (Yeh, 2013, p.205). By blurring the line between the two binaries and complicating what looked like a simple unequal exchange, he avoided the pitfall of *resentement* and the reproduction of slave mentality–which was actually

Sartre's weakness towards negritude. An attempt can be made here to paraphrase Nietzsche's nobles and slaves as colonizers and colonized. Under a strict oppositional dichotomy of good versus evil, the colonized can reverse the values of the colonizers and claim them as theirs; the values of the colonized are constituted as the opposite of the poor values of the evil colonizer who dominates them. Far from creative action and the emergence of new values, this is merely a reactionary reversal of what already exists, and instead of a call for a new humanism there is a counter-claim on domination. When negation is a mere afterthought in the initial affirmative logic, the slave places emphasis on it; the masters indirectly negate only because of affirming their domination and the slaves can only affirm themselves through negating the Other (Kuehne, 2018). Therefore, as long as our understanding of power relations remains dependent on the inevitability of violence, the role of violence as self-creation is easily misinterpreted.

The confusion in Fanon's conceptualization of violence lies on whether he sees violence as a positive force that has constitutive potential for the subject, or as negation of the human potential by colonial domination. A sobering question is whether after the initiation of creative action violence remains a precondition for self-creation. Fanon understood violence primarily as the essence of the colonial system. It permeates all aspects of human life and interaction, including power relations and modes of resistance. As argued earlier in this chapter, if the negation of violence operates as a creative response and an entrance to the field of action, without carrying the seeds of colonial society, but by creating a new system of values, violence should become redundant. Butler (2008) criticised the dialectical logic for implying that opening the door for one consciousness, the door for the other consciousness closes; she counter-argues that the consciousness should be seen as an "open door" itself. Fanon transformed a broken dialectic so that the process of recognition does not only open the door of self-consciousness, but the door for a new humanity; this humanity is recognised through

the process of solidarity, fostered in the process of creating new meaning together. Butler describes this with an attractive metaphor of "the touch". If encountering the Other first comes through a gaze, then contact proceeds as a violent one, at least in the manner that dialectics of violent ontology require. But if the encounter starts with the touch, as in remaining in touch through solidarity, then violence loses its ontological necessity. The remaining of this chapter discusses how Fanon envisioned the creation of the new and the fostering of solidarity in the context of the violent struggle for liberation.

Violence and solidarity in revolutionary transformation.

Fanon is the thinker who made explicitly clear in the beginning of *The Wretched of the Earth* that 'decolonization is a violent phenomenon' (Fanon, 1963, p.35). He also suggested that decolonization is the 'veritable creation of new men' but cryptically added that 'this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power' (ibid, p.36). While reading together the two statements can lead to the conclusion that violence is the essence behind the creation of new men, therefore misinterpreting his position as a glorification of violence, his additional clarification denies a mystified view of violence. As explained, Fanon had already presented how colonial violence operates. He showed how the colonized and colonizer's 'first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together—that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler—was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons' (ibid). To assume that Fanon simply regarded violence as the key to restoring subjectivity creates a paradox: colonial violence should have already achieved that in the first place. A way out of this contradiction is to understand the difference between the function of violence as a negation of the subject's potential, as in the context of colonialism, and the impact of the usually violent struggle on the process of creating a new decolonized society. The logic of this differentiation is one based on progression. The colonized makes the decision to be recognised and stand up

to domination and then the armed struggled follows with the purpose of liberation. As long as the greater goal of the colonized is the shaping of new subjectivities and the creation of the new society, the violent struggle is the space in which this shall occur.

The reason that this struggle against domination is violent seems almost self-explanatory. As long as the other party to the conflict represents violent colonial domination, it is expected that the colonizer will not just abandon the colony without a fight. The opposite expectation would suggest a naïve view of colonial domination as an accident, when colonial powers had every reason to maintain their imperialist grip and, indeed, at least France seemed to have no intention of "abandoning" Algeria to its people. After dismissing this simplistic argument, the one that follows has to do with compromise and the means and character of the struggle, namely terrorism. The revolutionaries are not interesting in a peaceful decolonization and Fanon himself insists that 'only violence pays' (ibid, p.61). The validity of this point depends on which side one sees as having the rightful claim to the country and on the political choice to point at the side of domination. To accuse the colonized of escalating the violent struggle implies that they are the side that initiated violence while, contrary to this, the origins of violent domination rests with the colonial power.

'In a war of liberation, the colonized people must win, but they must do so cleanly, without "barbarity"' (ibid, p.24). Fanon exposes the irrationality of the demand to liberate oneself while staying out of the sphere of violence which is already encircling the colonized. In doing so, Fanon also reveals how the discourse of 'barbarian underdeveloped people' places those who fight to liberate themselves in a defensive position, not only in terms of struggle but also in terms of escaping such stereotypes of savagery and backwardness. 'Confronted with a world ruled by the settler, the native is always presumed guilty' (ibid, p.53). The supposedly

inherently violent subject, which lacks refinement and civility, is expected to engage in acts of brutality and illegitimate violence; illegitimate because it posits itself against what the colonizer perceives as his own legitimate violence. The colonizer then is in a struggle both against the physical violence of the colonizer and the definition of anticolonial struggle as illegitimate. Consequently, we can witness a continuity between liberation from the physical domination of colonialism, and liberation from the psychological oppression of a racist, colonial discourse. The revolutionary subject needs to free itself from its Manichaean identify and acknowledge that its agency necessarily operates within a framework of pre-existing violence.

The initial phase of decolonization is one of confusion: it is the transition from reaction to response. The beginning of mobilization coincides with the decision for revolutionary transformation but, as this has not found a pace yet, the counter-violence comes as a reaction of accumulated pressure against colonial violence. Trojan (2016, p.412) describes thoroughly how 'there is a role for a reactive politics in the initial phase' but 'in addition to backward-looking politics of injury and identity necessary to mobilize a counterviolence of liberation, there must exist a forward-looking politics of world building'. The initial moment of reaction that ends shortly when the dialectical enemies finally find themselves in front of each other is visible in Fanon's perceptive distinction between 'atmospheric violence' and 'violence in action' (Fanon, 1963, p.70). Atmospheric violence matches the early stage of realization of the necessity for struggle, when enmity is brought to the surface and finds its target. The aggressiveness towards oneself and the community, and the mystical violent rituals of the colonized are eventually channelled and turned against the colonizer. In other words, after wandering around in a sphere of negation, violence is put on a leash by the colonized and finally a response can be uttered. Fanon describes how this atmosphere of violence becomes

alarming and brings the colonizer at unease (ibid, p.71). This uneasiness is crucial because we can assume it is the first sign of the collapse of violent negation. The colonizer finally notices the colonized subject and becomes aware of the potential the subject bears. This of course comes with more hate, fury and contempt, and usually threats and use of violence; the violence of negation gives its place to physical violence and shows of strength. The colonizer and the colonized are now finally placed opposite to each other and are ready to engage with each other, or at least against each other.

Nevertheless, at the same time, violence also lies in the transformation that the revolutionary experiences. There is a slow and painful mutation of the subject which is ongoing, as opposed to defeating the colonizer, and comes with the commitment to a process of endlessly creating (Scandoval, 2000). Decolonization is for Fanon not a project with a discernible end but an ongoing process. The struggle for liberation serves the purpose of ensuring that transformation can take place and remain an open process. Decolonization is then not simply an end to the colonizer's presence but a continuous effort to undo and unlearn the effects of colonial power and knowledge on the subject (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). This does not imply that the actions of colonialism can magically be erased, which is why Fanon proposes the construction of new meaning and an ongoing engagement in action in order to detach the colonized from the past by anchoring them to the new. This is why Fanon thinks that the struggle must maintain its dynamic and not succumb to fatigue and indecisiveness. To negotiate peaceful decolonization and accept the colonizer's terms signifies abandonment of the project of decolonization altogether. Fanon warns:

> In the course of the struggle for liberation, things are not dear in the consciousness of the fighting people. Since it is a refusal, at one and the same time, of political non-existence, of
> wretchedness, of illiteracy, of the inferiority complex so subtly instilled by oppression, its battle is for a long time undifferentiated. Neo-colonialism takes advantage of this indetermination. Armed with a revolutionary and spectacular good will, it grants the

> former colony everything. But in so doing, it wrings from it an economic dependence which becomes an aid and assistance program (Fanon, 1967, p.121).

Commenting on the idea of peaceful decolonization Fanon reveals the reason against it: 'History, however, shows that no colonialist nation is willing to withdraw without having exhausted all its possibilities of maintaining itself' (Fanon, 1967, 155). Fanon is suspicious towards initiatives by colonial powers to offer their colonies independence: 'quick, quick, let's decolonize (…) the Congo before it turns into another Algeria' (Fanon, 1963, p.70). The colonial power aims to 'disarm the people', literally and especially metaphorically, with such moves and ensure that the newly emergent state will remain dependent and controlled by the former colonizer, in a neo-colonial context. Internationally, such procedures are welcomed and hailed as 'success', without paying attention to whether self-determination emerged indeed from the local Self or it was merely offered in a sense of apparent withdrawal. Oppositely, it seems to be much preferable to ensure a certain level of control in subsequent events; unpredictability of political action is to be avoided at all costs. This is still evident today, from Western concerns over "what the aftermath of the Arab Spring will bring" to the United Nation's commitment to rebuild a nation-state after intervention. Indeed, to claim that international concerns over violence have to do more with the unpredictability that violence brings and less with the humanitarian costs associated with it is hardly an inconceivable argument today.

Fanon explains: 'when the people have taken violent part in the national liberation they will allow no one to set themselves up as "liberators"' (ibid, p.94). This makes sense in the context of the previous discussion of Hegelian influences that want the colonized to take a risk and actually experience the process of liberation. Many have claimed that violence for Fanon has an educational character, which is not an extraordinary claim given how Fanon writes:

‘Illuminated by violence, the consciousness of the people rebels against any pacification’ (ibid). However, in what ways are the rebels “illuminated” since Fanon has excluded all supernatural properties of violence? Colonial dialectics are again capable of suggesting an answer here, as the colonized abandons the submissive position of safety and within actual confrontation finally manages to see a clear picture of the colonial situation that reminds one what the fight is really about. In other words, the violence that illuminates is the violence of the colonizer, as it has always been from the beginning.

In a sense, the colonized do not expect to “illuminate” themselves because of the armed struggle, but only to establish their decision to disengage from the relationship of domination. The ‘new Algerian’ who is being produced by revolutionary experience–and not merely by the bare fact of violence– has become independent in a de facto manner. Liberation comes neither with the defeat of the colonial oppressor nor with violent struggle. The ‘new Algerians’ are ‘virtually independent’ because ‘they already consider themselves sovereign’ (ibid, p.28). Therefore, there seems to be a qualitative differentiation between engagement in violent struggle and liberation. In a way, violent struggle against the oppressor is secondary and actually emerges after the subject has perceived itself as sovereign and independent. Fanon’s primary focus is not the violent reaction to the colonizer, which is dictated by a pre-existing structure of violence anyway; instead it is the transformation of the subject, which becomes independent from the very moment that it acts independently.

However, Fanon’s appeals to sovereignty remain ambiguous as placed in the context of demanding self-determination and the construction of a nationalist identity. Fanon’s appeal to nationalism is a troublesome one and Fanon himself was concerned with how decolonized people can undertake the nationalization project without giving in to the essentialism and

racism embedded in colonial violence (Sealey, 2018). Fanon indeed wanted Algerian independence to be expressed in the form of national identity. The nationalism he envisioned was one rooted in the authority of the people who take back control of the land and themselves as subjects through liberation. 'In a dizzyingly swift mutation the colonized acquires a new quality, which develops in and through combat. The language used by the FLN, from the first days of the Revolution, is a language of authority' (Fanon, 1967, p.100). Creating anew the post-colonial state required not only new subjects in an empty sense but the refashioning of all those concepts that relate to political existence, including sovereignty. However, the particular historical context in which Fanon operated, could not furnish his vision with a concept of sovereignty that disassociates sovereignty from violence and therefore domination. In saying that the creative struggle of decolonization requires the establishment of a new independent, sovereign nation-state, Fanon implies a rejection of the kind of sovereignty that already exists, that is one of colonial domination.

Fanon tried to suggest a different kind of sovereignty which is expressed in terms of human dignity: human dignity that becomes the foundation that unites people under freedom in place of an abstract cause (Schaffer, 2004, p.130). The role of authority among the revolutionaries is similar to the one Arendt sees in the establishment of a "foundation" of the newly formed political community in her work *On Revolution*. In Fanon's case the "promise" of this foundational action is human dignity. Fanon's sovereignty had no transcendental or normative meaning but constituted a condition of political existence in freedom (Hirsch, 2014) This condition of existence has the prerequisite of recreation in the sense of response to the model of sovereignty that accompanied colonial rule. It is what Hirsch (ibid, p. 295) means by saying that 'true sovereignty requires a certain ethos of decolonization that reverses this process'. This is why Fanon's nationalism was compatible with other countries in the process of

decolonization. ‘The independence of a new territory, the liberation of the new peoples, are felt by the other oppressed countries as an invitation, an encouragement, and a promise’ (1967, p.145). In a decolonized world, with a new form of sovereignty, the promise of human dignity could expand from the national to the international level, exactly because domination is absent. Revolutionary anti-colonial action transforms not just the new nation-state but a whole region– until then seen as a “Third World” – and consequently international relations as a whole, by reshaping sovereignty and freeing it from its ties to violence and domination. Solidarity among nations becomes equal to solidarity within because they all stand together against the same threat.

Solidarity can be read through both positive and negative connotations. Klímová (2014) in a discussion of post-colonial solidarity differentiates between a Durkheimian “negative solidarity” that operates in an oppositional logic and Fanon’s positive solidarity. Solidarity that emerges out of an oppositional logic marks the need of the revolutionaries to establish an identity which stands in antithesis to the colonizer’s identity. This solidarity is reactionary as it is based on a defensive logic: the individuals are brought together because they all stand against what they fight. Contrary to this, Fanon’s solidarity is forged through a shared living experience which, as already explained, is the experience of the liberational fight against colonialism and the creation of the new community. This also implies that the community is not already essentially forged in advance of a solidarity that follows by virtue of existing in this community. In other words, solidarity for Fanon is not a product of identity, rather identity is created in the context of solidarity; the members of the community identify with their experiences and with those who share them with. Fanon therefore opposes a concept of solidarity created solely around the idea of nationality (ibid, p.82) and embraces instead revolutionary solidarity among those who have struggled against what oppresses them. The

merit of this solidarity is that it can be eternally reproduced and remain active within the community without the need to acquire an imaginary mythical status, as long as the revolutionary commitment against domination remains intact.

It is worth noting that with this approach Fanon allows enough space for class solidarity against capitalist exploitation and domination to be included in his conceptualization. This dismisses complaints that Fanon's "stretched Marxism" maintains a focus on race and ethnicity, therefore preventing the building of any "real" solidarity based in class consciousness (Birani, 2013, p.6). Fanon may be the thinker who deserves to be claimed, besides post-colonial theory, by both Marxism and post-structuralism, as his work appears to have strong affinities with both. However, one has to admit that Fanon was fully aware that colonialism impacted both at the material and the symbolic levels, and can be analysed as such, in the form of political, economic and cultural domination (Scatamburlo-D'Annibale and Langman, 2002). In the case of consciousness and the shaping of solidarity, national consciousness was not the final destination of anticolonial mobilization. Fanon instead urged for a rapid movement from a national consciousness to a social and political one, exactly because he feared the bourgeoisie would attempt to hijack it (Sajed and Seidel, 2019). As long as there is experience of domination, people can bond in solidarity through the effort to eliminate it.

The idea of forging solidarity through experience, not only has striking resemblance to Camusean thought, but also has the merit of being widely applicable while retaining its strongly political character. It suggests that every human who has experienced domination and a negation of dignity deserves to be included in Fanonian solidarity. Therefore, the only essential precondition of it is a rejection of domination and human degradation. The shared experience is not restricted to colonial domination since all forms of domination are essentially equally threatening to Fanon's universal ethics of humanism. Fanon invites the idea of empathy as the

compass of political action and emphasizes how human dignity must be prioritized in our treatment of others, even if this obliges us to question and reshape our values (Mba, 2018). This also obliges us to remain open to singularity in our solidarity, since it is the very character of experience in the first place. Alessandrini (2014) explains that singularity and solidarity do not necessarily pose an either/or question, especially in Fanon's case where his solidarity was offered in multiple contexts without them being mutually exclusive. Following from such an understanding of solidarity, its link with the armed struggle has hopefully become more refined and explicit.

As well as that, a key element of this thesis also becomes evident. The chapter on Camus's thought discussed his insistence on the love for humanity as a precondition for rebellion. Solidarity is crucial because it can bring humans together in their otherwise subjective meaning. I suggest an analogy in which Fanon rejects the futility of constant reaction–an almost Sisyphean repetition–for the sake of a response that promotes a human solidarity and creativity, which can be compared to the Camus's Promethean love of humanity. If Camus tried to define human rebellion, a ceaseless action, in order to place the limits of solidarity to murderous violence, one wonders how far from that is Fanon's revolutionary struggle in the effort to create a human community of solidarity that rejects the murderous violence of colonialism. This is not an effort to overlook the apparently very different approaches to violence the two thinkers held. However, for both Camus and Fanon solidarity is founded upon conditions of struggle–or rebellion–and in turn this struggle can only be justified by solidarity; both thinkers "exist because they rebel/revolt". Furthermore, for both thinkers, solidarity is not merely a means to achieve justice but a precondition of it. For Camus, revolt produces a sense of human dignity which expresses itself in solidarity; for Fanon the revolutionary struggle binds humans in solidarity, which fosters a community based on human dignity.

Consequently, the discussion so far has explained certain important aspects and interconnections regarding the role of the armed struggle, the manifestations of violence and the goal of human dignity and solidarity. All these elements depend upon Fanon's purpose of creative action which will give rise to new humans in new communities; indeed, this is the only context in which decolonization has a meaning for Fanon, the only way liberation will not imprison itself in reaction but become a response that guides to freedom. All the other aspects discussed so far, not just violence but also humanism, are secondary to the call for creative freedom. The reason, as explained earlier, is that violence in Fanonian thought is merely a condition–both as a situation and its necessary consequence– while humanism is the expected outcome. Humanism cannot be the main purpose, as long as this implies an end goal, which Fanon has rejected for the sake of continuous (re)creation and action. As Marriott (2014) claims, creation as "invention" is the opposite of what Fanon called petrification, it has no preordained meaning, and it accomplices an interruption; in other words, it is a constant discontinuation to the historical process and it carries all the unpredictability that action brings with it.

The question that arises is what this creative transformation looked like in practice, at least in the beginning of the revolutionary struggle and through Fanon's observations in Algeria. The above analysis already hints that Fanon did not expect this process to be a painless one. To begin with, the enemy was still real, as well as the danger of decolonization taking the country from a zone of non-being to what Fanon called out as economic zones of colonial influence (Fanon, 1967, p.123). The French, in a bitter refusal to let go of *Algérie française* would employ every method of combat, including torture, against what they claimed to be a terrorist threat. Moreover, Lazreg (2007) crucially reveals that in the same way Fanon was promoting the creation of "new men", the French authorities were attempting exactly the same through

methods of "psychological action". It is a tragic paradox that the colonized, after all, would not "only understand brute force", or at least this is what the French believed in creating a program to re-educate the colonized. The charming paradox is that of military men using psychology, while Fanon, a psychiatrist used politics and violence. Given the situation, the process of creative transformation was not an easy one; agreeing on its immediate success is even harder and, of course, what history further held for Algeria did not meet Fanon's hopes. Fanon did believe strongly in this process and "read" it behind many aspects of the revolutionary struggle. It is worth complementing the analysis with some of the most important aspects of such transformation to concretize the process from Fanon's eyes. Looking into concrete examples also makes it easier to pass judgment on these manifestations of creativity, although one needs to be fully conscious of the fact that the criticisms concern someone's observations in the 1950's.

Fanon's focus was unsurprisingly mostly on the transformation of the relations among revolutionaries and forging solidarity in the community. This was facilitated by the organization of the armed struggle which was necessarily assigning new roles and identities. But Fanon also sensed a more substantial, ideological transformation in this:

> Individualism is the first to disappear (…) The colonialist bourgeoisie had hammered into the native's mind the idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individual thought. Now the native who has the opportunity to return to the people during the struggle for freedom will discover the falseness of this theory. The very forms of organization of the struggle will suggest to him a different vocabulary (Fanon, 1963, p.47).

The creative moment behind this transformation is solidarity, which Fanon primarily sees–or wishes to see– in the context of the Algerian family. In the *Dying Colonialism* Fanon (1994) offers much detail on how parents and children, couples, and especially Algerian women found a new creative role and a path to freedom within the revolutionary sphere. All actors appear to

have gained substantial agency in the context of the struggle. It is worth discussing briefly the most cited and discussed of these actors, namely the Algerian woman.

In "Algeria Unveiled" (Fanon, 1994, p.35) Fanon first explains how colonial domination shaped the role of women in Algerian society, their identity, status and appearance. The insistence on converting and Europeanizing the Algerian woman was not an honest effort to liberate her but an attempt to dominate her, and through this, to interfere in the very structure of Algerian society. Fanon paints this picture as a struggle between two modes of patriarchy with the Western one trying to take over from the indigenous one. Thus, 'winning the woman over to the foreign values was at the same time achieving a real power over the man and attaining a practical, effective means of destructing Algerian culture' (ibid, p.39). In this context, wearing the veil seizes to be a cultural or religious symbol and becomes a symbol of resistance to colonial interference. The drop of the veil symbolizes then the drop of resistance and accepting the rape of the colonizer. With the beginning of the revolutionary struggle, the veil– the *haik*– changes; It is worn and removed strategically for the purposes of the struggle and becomes a tool, a technique of camouflage (ibid, p.61). The woman who wears it assumes now the potential to reveal or hide herself in practices of resistance. As part of struggle against domination, this potential becomes crucial because it is powerful and effective without any use of violence. The subject decides to appear and disappear in front of the oppressor in a way that brings agency back through this mode of resistance. Those women who dress as Europeans to avoid raising suspicions also get transformed through a new experience: 'The Algerian woman who walks stark naked into the European city relearns her body, re-stablishes it in a totally revolutionary fashion' (ibid, p.59). The Algerian woman in the revolutionary context seems to be constantly escaping fixation, at least in the field of appearing.

From the perspective of solidarity, the (un)veiling of the Algerian woman appears instantly problematic. The woman is finally moving forward and past the "double patriarchy" that restricted her during the years of colonialism. But Fanon does not explain what it was that transformed the native half of this patriarchy. Even if this poses as an act of solidarity, it is not like Fanon to not explain the transformative process and the source of that solidarity. If solidarity is to simply be seen as "acting together in the struggle" there are still two issues remaining. First, it is the fact that solidarity rests on the assumption that the Algeria woman is an object of desire for the French colonizer but, most importantly, one that the colonized can deprive him of. Chow (2010) criticizes Fanon for failing to recognize the woman's option of giving herself to the European man and detects a sense of mistrust towards a powerful agent with the potential for acts of miscegenation. Secondly, there is a problem with the woman's participation to the struggle. For example, Fanon explains that:

> Among the tasks entrusted to the Algerian woman is the bearing of messages, of complicated verbal orders learned by heart, sometimes despite complete absence of schooling. But she is also called upon to stand watch, for an hour and often more, before a house where district leaders are conferring (Fanon, 1994, p.53).

Fanon hurries to cheer a powerful image of the Algerian woman veiling and unveiling herself in a process of unfolding her agency. The importance of "gaining control of the body" would be undeniable, if only Fanon had not presented it as a welcomed accident that occurred in the process of the country's liberation. The Algerian women should be liberated at the same time her country does and not as a result of it; otherwise, liberation only concerns revolutionary men's country and the protection of the woman inside is a by-product of the struggle. But let us assume that the focus must remain on the common experience of the struggle which generates solidarity; that men and women finally work together to earn their country back through risking their lives and this forms the basis of a new society. To what extend is an unequal distribution of revolutionary labour in the heart of this picture? The Algerian woman

is the messenger, the non-combatant part, and she is the one who silently stands outside patiently while the (presumably) male leaders are discussing the future of their country. In all cases, the focus is on how useful the woman is an instrument in the hands of the revolutionaries. It is, of course, even better if the woman manages to improve herself through this experience; however, it is unclear how the Algerian woman saw an actual and creative transformation of herself through the images Fanon presents to us.

Nevertheless, the purpose of looking into what Fanon offered as proof of the transformation placed at the heart of his theory is not to question his views on feminism. Fanon did not stop at the case of the Algerian woman's transformation but tried to look for proof among other phenomena of the revolutionary reality. Such is the case of the growing popularity of the radio among the colonized. Fanon described this change with quite strong enthusiasm:

> The radio has appeared in a massive way at once and not in progressive stages. What we have witnessed is a radical transformation of the means of perception, of the very world of perception. Of Algeria it is true to say that there never was, with respect to the radio, a pattern of listening habits, of audience reaction. Insofar as mental processes are concerned, the technique had virtually to be invented. The Voice of Algeria, created out of nothing, brought the nation to life and endowed every citizen with a new status, telling him so explicitly (ibid, p.96).

Fanon does not become very clear about what "a radical transformation of the means of perception" entails. Fanon explains that the radio had long been associated with French colonialism which discouraged the colonized from becoming "listeners". Once "The Voice of Algeria" became the voice of the Algerian revolution, Fanon was astonished by how massively and rapidly the colonized refashioned themselves as devoted listeners. Even though filling Fanon's historical shoes helps understand the surprise and excitement, there are questions raised about the extent to which radio listening as presented here caused a radical transformation. The main concern is whether the change Fanon observed is an everyday example of creative action or a reaction. The fact that the French radio was already available

but rejected as the voice of the colonizer makes the listening of the Algerian radio a counter-hegemonic claim rather than a novel creation. Baucom (2001) explains why Fanon saw the radio as a metaphor of solidarity. First of all, this is because those not directly engaged in the struggle would gather themselves to listen to the radio. This would be not only to acquire information but also to experience the transmission together and be bound in solidarity; it was their way of becoming part of the struggle actively. Secondly, listening is not to be seen an act of consumption but a productive activity that 'transforms listeners into broadcasters (ibid, p.24). Poor and interrupted transmission would result in an effort to fill in the gaps and reconstruct the broadcast in their own voices and images. This is a powerful idea, which indeed gives us a clear indication of solidarity. However, to imply there is creative potential that opens-up to Algerian listeners is problematic in terms of agency. Reminding ourselves that "the subaltern cannot speak", the question is the extent to which the radio listener had the chance to voice original ideas and contestation, not only to his physically present co-listeners but to the broader audience and the broadcasters themselves. The radio broadcast may have been a crucial tool for Algerians in the revolutionary struggle, but the claim that it contributed as an instrument of creative transformation for subjects is not convincing.

In a sense, Fanon's overly trustful attitude towards social changes in revolutionary Algeria, and the attempt to frame them as experiences of genuine creative transformation do not indicate an intention to mislead his audience but rather emphasize his adamant belief in the revolutionary struggle and the potential for change. I suggest that Fanon consciously held an optimistic attitude towards the Algerian revolution, rushing to read positive signs perhaps, but still the potential obstacles are also recognised in his work. Fanon never claimed that the revolutionary process is one of guaranteed success, and he did not turn a blind eye to challenges. This is consistent with his claims that there is no such thing as an "end" of

decolonization but its success rests upon a continuous struggle for change and political action free of domination. Fanon had recognised the dangers posed to a colonized people left without a framework of knowledge and a sudden loss of the ground under their feet, with only consolation the presence of other around them (Ward, 2015). But while solidarity was widely desired and demanded among the revolutionaries, one has to keep in mind that colonialism was a system that fragmented the colonized and held them in an inhuman status of domination for too long. Algerians had to remain faithful in the process of re-inventing themselves and this is probably the reason of Fanon's optimistic attitude; but there is no doubt that he was aware of the general exhaustion and limitations of the Algerian population that found itself in a state of war after a long period of domination.

The fight against colonialism is exhausting because it is in an internal conflict. For Fanon, the struggle is oriented not against the colonizer but against the colonial mode of operation, including all structures and those 'Westernized elements' (Fanon, 1994, p.111) which resist transformation. Elements such as traditional authorities or feudal structures in the countryside also become the target of the struggle. The colonized people need to break not just with the present situation but also with the past, including their own past. In this context of struggle, the greatest challenge for Fanon is to keep all parts of the nation in unity while avoiding domination of the one segment of society over the other.

The separatist nature of colonial rule has given rise to antagonisms between 'the native who is excluded from the advantages of colonialism and his counterpart who manages to turn colonial exploitation to his account' (ibid, p.112). Separatist practices bring about different coping routes for the colonized; those in towns operate under a more individualistic attitude through closer interaction with the colonizer, while those in the countryside remain more isolated with tradition serving as the binding element of the community. Besides the apparent lack of trust,

different modes of operation genuinely hinder the transformative process. Fanon criticizes nationalist parties in their belief that they can guide and frame people's action uniformly with 'an *a priori* schedule', when 'in reality the chains forged by the colonial system still weigh it down heavily' (ibid, p.113). Neglecting the diversity among groups can jeopardise not just conflict dynamics but the transformative process itself, and hence the aftermath of decolonization. Fanon explains how 'tribalism in the colonial phase gives way to regionalism in the national phase' (ibid, p.114). Overall, the "fight from the inside" is oriented against those elements resisting the transformative process of decolonization, but the process itself cannot be predetermined and imposed on groups.

The Algerian failure to turn its revolutionary ideas into practice lies neither in Fanon's theoretical weakness, nor in a lack of commitment to end domination. It is the very reality of domination that is already many steps ahead in the revolutionary struggle. Sajed (2019, p, 645) reveals the limits of solidarity when it meets the results of a 'merciless colonial political economy' that 'forced the Algerian people to cannibalize itself' and made survival 'the only moral choice' of many peasants that had to care for their families. However, Fanon chose not to submit his intellect to a mere description of reality but to produce a political proposal to change it. At the heart of this proposal is a faith in human action and solidarity, as the vehicle to freedom, and he sketches this more or less in a philosophy intriguingly similar to that of Arendt and Camus. Irrespectively of what became of Algeria, Fanon's thought emerged out of her struggle for independence and from the field of action. This matters not only because we can learn from his experiences but because his political action became the living proof of his thought. Alessandrini (2011) reminds us of the importance of who Fanon was, and invites scholars to carefully examine his biography, so that we can appreciate his genuinely political decision to become part of the revolutionary struggle in Algeria, not in vague terms of identity

or as a sympathetic supporter, but as a living example of an actor who took risks and assumed responsibility for his actions.

Conclusion

The chapter has shown how Fanon defined colonialism as an extreme form of dehumanising violence which attacks one's subjectivity and negates the potential of human beings. The colonised are denied recognition and the colonial dialectical relationship becomes a trap for both sides. The analysis has revealed that Fanon did not see violence and domination as intrinsic to our ontological relation to the Other; therefore, he suggested that the colonised should resist internalised violence and reclaim their subjectivities through creative action and solidarity. Black action should not be merely a reaction to White initiatives but an effort to shape new values and a new humanism that does not exclude Blackness. The chapter explains that it is paradoxical to claim that Fanon praised violence as a force that restores subjectivity, since he claims that the key function of violence is to dehumanize and destroy subjectivity. It is also unlikely that Fanon glorified violence as vengeance; one the contrary, he resisted Manichaean colonial discourses that portrayed the colonised as savage and bloodthirsty barbarians. Instead, Fanon saw decolonization as a complex and ongoing procedure that rests upon creative action which builds solidarity and brings change. In conclusion, Fanon emphasized the importance of struggle and resistance within a violent colonial context in order to empower subjects and disrupt the negating function of violence. The addition of this chapter not only brought together Arendt, Camus and Fanon to support the claim that violence functions as negation of potential, but also explained how violence destroys subjectivity and potential and how it is covertly reproduced by dialectical thinking.

Chapter 4: Violence of negation in the shaping of biopolitical subjectivities

This chapter serves the purpose of bridging the discussion between the historical views on violence in the previous thinkers and the view of violence in modern biopolitics. Biopolitics and the transition from sovereign power to biopower rest on the conceptualisation of a productive power that intends to optimise human life instead of threatening it. I will argue that despite this being true, biopolitics do involve domination and pose a threat to subjectivity. In the context of development, human rights and individual liberties, violence still functions as negation of human potential. This is because governmentality and the goal of regulation in biopolitics operate as a treatment of the unpredictability of human action. In this political context, the meaning of human potential is hijacked and promoted in a limited version, as a set of principles of good governance and qualities determined by market dynamics.

The chapter begins with a discussion of Foucault's work on biopolitics with a focus on power. I explain the emphasis of biopolitics on regulation and efficiency as a way of risk management and a treatment of uncertainty. For this reason, I argue that biopolitical rationalities shape subjectivity in a way that negates human potential outside the limitations of governance. This means that biopolitics are not immune to violence; on the contrary, the power of the norm can have destructive impact on subjectivity. From this perspective, the second section explores forms of neoliberal violence against the biopolitical subject, the *homo economicus*. I look into how the financialisaton of discourses, and discourses of development specifically, establish the responsibilisation of the subject and a binary of success and failure in terms of "enterpreneuring the Self". It is under this view of "human capital" that neoliberalism defines human potential. I emphasize the inability of subjects to exclude themselves from such norms and the lack of alternatives, which shows how biopolitical violence becomes omnipresent and creates a space

of "inclusive exclusion". This becomes prominent in section three which discusses biopolitics in the work of Giorgio Agamben and examines exceptionalism as a strategic biopolitical technique. Agamben's figure, the *homo sacer,* is the biopolitical subject whose politicized and depoliticized existence makes it the ideal example of the "inclusive exclusion" in biopolitics. Section four places the *homo sacer* in the context of biopolitical violence described in section two in order to explain the violent shaping of subjectivity and portray the homo sacer as the failure of neoliberal biopolitics whose potential has been negated.

The potential of the self-entrepreneur: biopolitical regulation and the problematization of uncertainty

In *Society Must be Defended*, Foucault's lectures discuss the transition from sovereign power to biopower–power over life–the emergence of what he calls "biopolitics of the human race" (Foucault, 2003, p.243). The transition is traced by Foucault in the form of techniques, or technologies of power, and starts with those that emerged as techniques centred on the individual bodies, with the aim of controlling them, in the context of what he called disciplinary power. This type of power separates bodies, classifies, examines them in a process of objectification which, unlike premodern power over the body, is not manifested on the body as external violence. In this context, individual bodies are objectified in order to be "subjectified" after 'incorporating the objectives of power, which become the norm for [his] own aims and behaviour' (Oksala, 2005, p.99). Foucault's next trace involves a new technology of power that moves beyond disciplinary techniques, not replacing but integrating them, and concerning not the individual body but the body as part of a species. In other words, while disciplinary power is addressed to the "man as body", biopower addresses "man as having being", not individually but as 'a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on' (Foucault, 2003, p.242). An additional domain of biopolitics

also concerns human interaction with its environment as something that is shaped but also has direct effects on the population, as opposed to an earlier focus on "nature". These processes of the body become in modernity a new object of knowledge and control.

Overall, 'biopolitics deals with the population as a political problem' which is expressed, measured and dealt with in scientific terms (ibid, p.245). The fact that the problematisation concerns the population as a new unit is not just one novelty of biopower but an essential part of its rationale. Biopolitics deals with "the population" neither as a representation of society nor of the individual, but a new body. Foucault describes it as 'a body with so many heads that, while might not be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted' (ibid). This categorisation technique then involves a massification of individuals described in a manner similar to Arendt's account of totalitarianism's "gigantic man". This is not to suggest that biopolitics and totalitarianism are the same thing and, at least for Foucault, this would be a problematic view that dismisses the contingence of phenomena. It could be seen though as an independent tactic of power that is useful for the particular rationalities of different types of power. Specifically, biopolitics are concerned with phenomena that bear economic and political effects which gain prominence only at the mass level. These phenomena are unpredictable at the individual level, but as the mass level it becomes easier to break them down into constants (ibid, p.246). This makes easier the purpose of biopolitics to introduce mechanisms of predictability in order to intervene and regulate them. Therefore, the emphasis is not on discipline anymore but on regulation, which is why Foucault offers biopower the alternative term 'the power of regularisation' (ibid, p.247). More importantly, this regulation targets particularly those aspects of life which are the most unpredictable, especially because life has become more complex and rapidly changing in modernity.

Foucault (2008, p.1) loosely defined biopolitics as:

> a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power.

The significance of these emerging phenomena stems from the transformation in the patterns of power, and therefore politics, compared to their previous practices but mainly sovereign ones. This is at least where Foucault begins in *The History of Sexuality* by discussing the sovereign's power of life and death. This right was exercised in practice as either deciding to kill or to refrain from killing and let live. Sovereign power was granted on the basis of defending the sovereign and was summarised by Foucault as a right of seizure of life, bodies and things. It is in this context that Fanon brings in biopower as the counterpart of the original power of the sovereign. This additional form of power is described as one 'that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavours to administer, optimise and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations' (Foucault, 1978, p. 137). This power is not exercised for the defence of sovereign power anymore but on behalf of the existence of everyone, not in a juridical sense but in its literal biological sense. Power itself neither appeared nor disappeared, because for Foucault power is not a substance. The transformation has to do with a change in how power functioned: from "kill or let live" it moved to a choice to "foster life or disallow it".

This means that the new type of power does not aim for perfection, as discipline before it would require, but operates in a far more flexible way. Biopower operates under the logic of maximising all positive elements in society while trying to minimise all risks and inconveniences, without the illusion that these can be completely suppressed (Foucault, 2008, p. 19). Power for Foucault can afford operating as such because its effects can affect the subject even when they are not fully successful. There is then a spirit of efficiency and an emphasis on

outcomes rather than details. This is also obvious in how normalisation functions; instead of clearly distinguishing the normal from the abnormal, there is now an interplay between different distributions of normality and it is these distributions that serve as the norm (ibid, p.63). In other words, certain elements are seen as "more normal" than others, desirable, and therefore are meant to be promoted against those seen as "less normal".

In the meantime, both forms of power discussed remained in place, not in opposition but coexisting in the wider web of power relations. Hence, one the one side, disciplinary power focuses on controlling the body in terms of its corporeal anatomy, optimising its usefulness-in-docility, while on the other side, biopower focuses on controlling the body as part of a species, with a particular interest in all the biological processes of life. It is not that the human body is becoming a target for power for the first time. Power always had the ability to coerce and destroy bodies, as well as to discipline and transform them according to norms. However, with the addition of biopolitics to disciplinary practices, power has now taken control of life in general:

> To say that power took possession of life in the nineteenth century, or to say that power at least takes life under its care in the nineteenth century, is to say that it has, thanks to the play of technologies of discipline on the one hand and technologies of regulation on the other, succeeded in covering the whole surface that lies between the organic and the biological, between body and population (Foucault, 2003, p. 253).

This description of power transformations goes beyond a simplistic question of whether an essentialised sovereign power found itself in competition, ending up either in persisting or retreating. This is because for Foucault power relations are understood in a much broader sense and through an understanding of their functions. In this case, power *operating as* sovereignty was incapable of governing a rapidly transforming society successfully at all levels. The first step was to further its grip through discipline, by introducing mechanisms of surveillance and training of the individual body, and all relevant, yet fragmented institutions. In the second step,

power adjusted again to control phenomena concerning the population as a whole, which are practically all human biological processes. Foucault's concern with the sovereign is not a primary one but one way of understanding different practices of power:

> the territorial sovereign became an architect of the disciplined space, but also, and almost at the same time, the regulator of a milieu, which involved not so much establishing limits and frontiers, or fixing locations, as, above all and essentially, making possible, guaranteeing, and ensuring circulations: the circulation of people, merchandise, and air, etcetera (Foucault, 2009, p.29).

This milieu regulated by the sovereign is the space in which all elements of uncertainty are to be scrutinized and introduced to security processes. Regulation, the treatment of the uncertain, is processed by an apparatus of security much different to disciplinary procedures. The difference lies in "loose" management as opposed to zealous intervention; the apparatus of security just "lets things happen" without trying to prevent their course in advance (Foucault, 2009, p.45). This does not mean that intervention does not take place, but by posing as regulation it is much closer to the logic of *laissez-faire*. In other words, the law prohibits, and discipline prescribes, and the essential function of security, without prohibiting or prescribing, but possibly making use of some instruments of prescription and prohibition, is to respond to a reality in such a way that this response cancels out the reality to which it responds —nullifies it, or limits, checks, or regulates it (ibid, p.47).

Two important points have emerged in this context. First, it has to be clearly established that the rise of biopolitics does not signal a retreat of sovereignty or a retreat from the disciplinary character of power. The changes observed refer to ways in which power relations in a broader sense function. Foucault clearly states that:

> we should not see things as the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a society of discipline, and then of a society of discipline by a society, say, of government. In fact, we have a triangle: sovereignty, discipline, and governmental management, which has population as its main target and apparatuses of security as its essential mechanism (ibid, p.107).

Second, it is clear that biopolitics and liberalism go hand in hand. If biopolitics entails optimisation of life and regulation of unpredictability, liberalism operates under the logic of risk calculation. The apparently free interplay of interests and initiatives is backed by a set of security mechanisms and biopower has a central role in this. Foucault also acknowledges that biopower 'was an indispensable element in the development of capitalism' as it helped adjust 'the phenomena of population to economic processes' (ibid, p.141). A central figure arising out of this adjustment is that of the homo *economicus*. The main task of the homo *economicus* is to accept reality and respond to it rationally; to accept reality implies an acceptance of the 'rules' as long as these are dictated by biopolitical rationales. Therefore, the homo *economicus* is easily governable in the sense of being manageable and flexible in responding to systematic modifications (Foucault, 2008, p.270). This brings out the centrality of governing practices in Foucault's analysis of biopolitics, as explored in his work on governmentality.

A first encounter with the term governmentality resonates with the idea of governable subjects: there is a mentality that welcomes governance. Governance here is not to be seen only in the strict sense of a political government but in the sense of "conducting conduct". If power establishes a set of rationalities and the subject is an effect of power, then biopolitical rationalities are those that orchestrate individual conduct and shape subjectivity accordingly. When it comes to governmentality, there is no straight-forward definition of what forever remained a work in progress for Foucault. Walters (2012, p.39) has tried to put together a general approach to governmentality: Governmentality is an analytical approach to techniques and knowledges found in attempts to govern conduct–not strictly by the state but wherever power is located; it is a central element of the genealogy of the modern state that explains its deployment as a "matrix of government; it is a term sometimes interchangeable with liberalism

but without that meaning that there can only be liberal forms of governmentality. In this sense, we can assume here a diffused power structure that employs techniques and produces knowledge to encourage conduct based on liberal premises. Governmentality is therefore an idea directly linked to the technologies of power.

In the context of governmentality, it can be argued that the economic sphere has gained explanatory force over the social meaning that human action is analyzed in terms of rational choices based on a cost benefit analysis, investment and capital management (Gane, 2018, p.52). There is of course the controversial distinction between classical liberalism and neo-liberalism. The crucial distinction is neo-liberalism's emphasis on freedom and the market. From the classical liberal priority to limit state power to the minimum required for a government to be functional and effective, neo-liberalism insists on freedom from government not just to balance its power but because it is seen as something inherently negative (Kelly, 2014, p.150). Power instead is to remain diffused in accordance to the logic of "loose management" mentioned above. However, with centralised government being in retreat, a question that arises is whether responsibility over the social and economic order vanishes with it or is simply carried away elsewhere. It is expected that a transition from firm control to regulation suggests more flexibility but also higher risk. But the fact that biopolitics has set a purpose of minimising risk implies that this risk still has to be carried by someone at least in terms of risk calculation mentioned above.

While security apparatuses do remain alert in biopolitics, risk calculation is assigned to the individual based on the assumption of rational choice. Facing the danger that an individual might still make poor choices in exercising liberal freedoms, responsibility emerges as another crucial technology in neo-liberal power relations (Biebricher and Johnson, 2012). Biopolitical

subjects, in the context of life optimisation, are required to behave responsibly, consume responsibly and even gamble responsibly. On a first level, as the dominant cliché of–at least Western–modern societies suggests, "with great power comes great responsibility". However, if power is understood as power relations, it becomes less clear how responsibility is to be shared. To make matters worse, it is far from clear what exactly responsible behaviour entails. A paradox arises in which the individual is free by virtue of being rational but also constrained to behave responsibly and not irrationally. Moreover, if the subject is the effect of power in the Foucauldian sense and power shapes the conduct of subjects, then neo-liberal freedoms are shallower than they appear; eventually biopower seems to be arguing its way out of responsibility. A crucial and relevant question emerges here: Does the fact that biopower is committed to life enhancement and neoliberal biopolitics are governed by the principle of freedom mean that biopolitics are entirely benevolent? If not, then perhaps biopolitical violence is not an oxymoron and biopower can also be harsh and even murderous despite its objective is to increase life.

Foucault (2003, p. 254) himself posed the rhetorical question "how can biopower kill if its basic function is to improve life" only to introduce racism as his immediate response. Racism is a phenomenon pre-existing to biopolitics, but the emergence of biopower incorporated it to state mechanisms. In that sense, racism makes a biological distinction among the population of who must live and who must die. The function of racism is that it translates the war logic, which links survival to the enemy's death, to biological terms: the inferior and abnormal will die out, therefore the strong and healthy will be preserved. This transition to the biological depoliticises racial hostility and conflict and killing becomes acceptable because it involves a biological threat to the population (ibid, p. 256). By presenting a group of humans as a disease biopower protects and optimises life by killing them. Foucault's approach is interesting

because it understands racism not as derived from positive markers such as skin colour and geopolitical location but as a relation of power; as a means to an end rather than an end in itself (Chow, 2018, p.116). The term killing here does not strictly signify murder but also exposure to death, or even political and social rejection. This indicates that the answer to biopolitical violence must necessarily involve an understanding of Foucauldian power and its relation to violence and resistance.

Beginning with power, in *The History of Sexuality* Foucault tries to "rework" the theory of power and offers a set of useful propositions. Foucault (1978, p.93) demands a nominalistic approach to the concept of power in the sense that he sees it primarily as 'the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society'. Foucault's propositions on power built on this approach and tell us that power: cannot be acquired, seized, or shared because it is not a thing but a relation; power relations are not complementary to other social and political relationships but internal to them; they are the immediate effect of social divisions and inequalities but they pose no binary opposition between rulers and ruled; they are based on aims and objectives and therefore are intentional but not in the sense of individual choice.

But perhaps the most important Foucauldian characteristic of power to be noted is that it is tied to resistance; not externally but as an inherent part of power relations. In a sense, power is relational because there exists 'a multiplicity of points of resistance' which form the relationship with what they resist (ibid, p.95). What is interesting in this perspective is that even though power is to be understood in terms of its counterpart in the relation formed, that is resistance, the relation is not to be understood as a binary between domination and submission. Foucault seems less interested in the size of power and more focused on the actional character of power relations. In fact, power reduced to its elements is simply action,

which also explains why Foucault does not see power as an essence but as something more dynamic:

> What defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action that does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present actions (Foucault, 1982, p.789).

Acting upon others' actions does not create a binary opposition that implies domination. Resistance does not have the character of a reaction, which exists in the relationship only as the passive object of domination destined to be perpetually subordinate (Foucault, 1978, p.96). The 'other', upon whom power is exercised, is a subject recognised as such and therefore bears the potential to bring into the relationship various responses, results and interruptions. Moreover, the impact of these actions is found not only in the present but also in future possibilities, some of which are encouraged while others discouraged. Power–and therefore resistance– in other words, produces but also constrains potential in a dynamic fashion. Foucault claimed that that his objective was not merely to study power as a phenomenon–and definitely not to produce a coherent theory of it–but to trace historically the process in which human become subjects (Nilson, 1998). This process of making the subject is therefore linked to possibilities, human potential, emerging as the product of a multiplicity of actions. The key role of power then lies in the fact that it constitutes the subject through the formation of a frame of meaning–intelligibility– for action and its motivations (Oksala, 2005, p.95). The subject is shaped on the basis of what it can or cannot possibly be.

What is striking at this point is the emerging similarities in Foucault's and Arendt's understanding of power, even though they are two thinkers who started with different objectives and ended up with different conclusions. Still, the common ground they share is crucial for the conceptualisation of power in relation to violence. To begin with, both Arendt and Foucault locate power in human relations and action. Perhaps Arendt never insisted in

calling power a relation as Foucault did and, in her work, power can easily be read as a substance; however, she does see power as generated through action which necessarily involves multiple subjects interacting. As seen in the first chapter, Arendt also saw this process as dynamic and produced by new beginnings and not as cyclical or reactional. Secondly, both Foucault and Arendt see the creation of meaning and truth as an outcome of power despite the fact that for Arendt this is a desirable outcome and a precondition of freedom, while for Foucault this can be both productive and restricting for subjects.

However, the similarity which is the most crucial and relevant for the present analysis is that both thinkers hold an oppositional view of the relationship between power and violence. For Arendt violence is purely destructive towards power and the political sphere and Foucault also contends that:

> [violence] it forces, it bends, it breaks, it destroys, or it closes of all possibilities (…) its opposite pole can only be passivity, and if it comes up against any resistance it has no other option but to try to break it down (Foucault, 1982, p.789).

Since Foucault sees resistance as one of the two sides of power relations, therefore as power, then this passage suggests that violence destroys power; it also implies that it can prevent action's dynamic character. Oksala (2010) recognises Foucault's agreement with Arendt but warns against overlooking Arendt's tendency to narrow down significantly the scope of the political sphere by insisting on a strict separation between social and political sphere. This can be problematic in a Foucauldian context because it encourages a depoliticisation of issues of social justice and dismisses biopolitics as an oxymoron. In paraphrasing the famous characterisation of a social but non (or de-) politicised character of society, Oksala (ibid, p.43) correctly suggests that 'we become ants precisely at the moment when we are no longer able to pose questions concerning our biological life in political terms'. But because of Oksala's view out of a posthuman Foucaudian framework, it easier to misunderstand Arendt when her

description of society is not seen as juxtaposed to the concept of human solidarity as explained in the first chapter. The main contrast is that between a reaction to necessity and genuine productive action.

Arendt indeed spoke against the idea of 'social' issues gaining prominence in the political sphere, having establishes a strict differentiation between the two. However, considering the context of Arendtian thought, her main preoccupation was to conceptualise the political in terms of action and beginnings and not to provide a breakdown of topics that could enter the political dialogue. Arendt's mistrust towards social issues needs to be translated as a mistrust towards necessity and the role of the *animal laborans*. As explained in the first chapter, Arendt discussed the human condition in general terms and not particular classes or groups of individuals; every human for Arendt has the capacity to be a political actor and a restriction to the sphere of necessity and biology implies a denial towards one's human condition. I suggest we approach Arendt not as a thinker who refuses to speak about "social" justice but as one who is hesitant towards *the processes* of politicising such topics. In other words, if tampering slightly with Arendt's vocabulary can be excused here, Arendt's claim could indicate that the language of necessity serves to depoliticise justice, as long as one has not been allowed to gain a place in political action among peers, in which case one's position is not one of equality. Justice and solidarity are only found in the political sphere in which power relations can translate to dynamic action open to various possibilities. Those excluded from the political sphere need to re-enter it not as biological beings who need to be fed but as human beings who need to be respected in their full potential.

The destructive character of violence described by Foucault is also a destruction of possibility which means that a view of violence functioning as negation of potential would be in

accordance with both Fanon and Arendt. Power as an action upon action has effects that shape a subject while the subject's response is also actional and not reactional, meaning that it is recognised in producing its own effects. While power as resistance involves a subject free to respond to power, violence acts directly on the body; the two are opposites in the sense that when one rules absolutely, the other is absent (Oksala, 2012). Violence is not concerned with the subject but with the objectified version of a body; it has effects on subjectivity by denying it. In a sense, violence creates a rupture within action so that it prevents the subject from presenting its response. This also explains Fanon's diagnosis of the colonised as shaped by colonial violence, and that the remedy he offered is a struggle not merely of counter-violence but of reclaiming subjectivity and action. Foucault also seems to think that resistance must necessarily be expressed as a response directly to power and not to violence. For example, Foucault argued that in dealing with sexually oppressive power the goal should not be a demand for liberation because this would simply represent resistance as the reverse side of the initially exercised power (Nilson, 1998, p.67). Instead of a mere anti-authoritarian reaction, resistance necessarily involves the deployment of a strategic response which questions dominant discourses and presents its own propositions.

Foucault's stance on this can be best understood by turning to Nietzsche, the philosopher of the will to power in an affirmative sense, as seen in the previous chapter in discussion of *ressentement* in master/slave morality. Not only has Foucault admitted that his work has been substantially influenced by Nietzsche regarding the conceptualisation of power, but it can also be argued that the *History of Sexuality* is an attempt to redo Nietzschean genealogy and question some of his premises on violence (Sluga, 2005). For Nietzsche, slave revolt gives rise to resentment and the creation of opposing values. The problem, however, is with how power dynamics are understood, and the role violence plays in this. Foucault's problem is with the

Nietzschean assertion that relations of power are inherently hierarchical, therefore, they unfold as domination and sudden reversals of it (ibid). While Nietzsche focuses on the origins of the state and population as a violent beginning that projected itself in future relations Foucault's genealogy rejects a totalising view by focusing on specific instances and the phenomena particular to it:

> [One conceives phenomena] in a relation to a power that is always juridical and discursive, a power that has its central point in the enunciation of the law. One remains attached to a certain image of power-law, of power-sovereignty, which was traced out by the theoreticians of right and the monarchic institution. It is this image that we must break free of, that is, of the theoretical privilege of law and sovereignty, if we wish to analyze power within the concrete and historical framework of its operation (Foucault, 1978, p.90).

In a sense, there is a question that arises similarly to the one about Hegel's master and slave positions in the dialectic. The problem is not located in the interplay between domination and its object but in the initial assumption of positions of domination. For the same reason Fanon's colonised are fixed and unable to resist from their initial position, until Fanon manipulates it to allow for various forms of struggle, Foucault choses to assume conditions of power/resistance circulation instead of an outset of domination. Power relations can of course produce domination, but Foucault sees this as 'far reaching, but never completely stable' (ibid, p.102). This approach allows a clearer observation of a plurality of resistances which can only exist according to the framework of power relations in which they are found. For Foucault power is not to be found in a fixed system of domination but in mobile power relations in which fixation is temporary and escapable; the possibility of resistance is a condition for power relations to exist (Bruns, 2005).

This insistence on circulation and imperfect domination is linked to Foucault's view of history in the sense that an understanding of power as violent domination would invoke a teleological understanding of history. Foucault's view of history is freed from any predictable course,

including dialectics, and therefore is an 'unpredictable unfolding of practices without necessary pattern or structure' (Weiskopf and Willmott, 2016, p.520). To place necessity in the development of history is to try to invent some transcendental principle outside of the specific movement of events, which is meant to provide stability to what is inherently unstable and fragmented. In turn, this would be linked to an equally problematic understanding of truth as an ahistorical essence instead of a product of dynamic power relations. If power and resistance are ceaseless and dynamic the same applies to the power-knowledge nexus. Foucault makes sure that his notion of power is freed from any teleological characteristics: it has no essence and it cannot be reduced to institutions or particular agents, but it is always exercised, hence remains in motion (Haugaard, 1997). It can be assumed then that if power cannot be an end, the same applies for knowledge, which is why Foucault sees meaning as contingent. Because of Foucault's particular conceptualisation of power 'the episteme loses some of its disembodied quality and becomes transformed into the idea of a regime of truth which gains its dynamic from power' (ibid, p.67).

A second layer of analysis of these theoretical positions reveals attention to the element of unpredictability and attempts to stabilise it. The concern can be attributed to both Foucault and Arendt because of the role action plays in their conceptualisations of power. As discussed in the earlier analysis of Arendt's work, she understands action as inherently unpredictable and irreversible. Arendt sees no alternative to this other than promise and forgiveness because efforts to stabilise unpredictability can only harm action and power; to deny unpredictability is to freeze action. This also became explicit in Camus's work which confirms that attacking absurdity and unpredictability only justifies violence, while the only remedy against it can be action in conditions of plurality. Foucault's concern with unpredictability is linked to how history is approached, especially in views that desire to stabilise and predict the course of

history, assuming comforting continuities. For Foucault, the assumption of continuity accumulates different occurrences together because of focusing on their similarities and overlooking the differences which are characteristic of every beginning; therefore, the possibility of unpredictability is excluded, unless it is seen as a violent interruption (Webb, 2013). There is a certain anxiety and the perception of threat associated with rapid change exactly because one dominant position is displaced by another and thought is challenged by an unfamiliar beginning; hence history becomes a tool that can uncover a meaningful origin that serves as an anchor to dominance.

Nevertheless, for Foucault the uneasiness brought by unpredictability and the encounter with new beginnings, and the perception of it as a threat and a destabilising rupture is not necessarily a sign of violence. Politics abandoned to unpredictability is not violent in the same way that power relations are not total domination. The element of resistance that switches places with power has a dynamic and agonistic character but does not transform power into violence exactly because it is not reactionary but keeps moving ahead. The difference presented to us by the Other exposes us to something new, unexpected and unpredictable, which challenges our existing knowledge and mechanisms; therefore, by being genuinely open to the Other we are open to dialogue and risk, but we also promote resistance. Resistance does not need a normative justification but 'it is a fundamental feature of our dialogical existence, something that constantly emerges to contest forms of closure and domination' (Falzon, 1998, p.89). Besides confirming the agonistic character of power relations, this also implies that an engagement with the Other creates power; the encounter brings up resistance, but as this is nothing more than a side of power relations, power is generated. Therefore, on the one hand, power and violence are not the same thing for Foucault and can even be conceived as antithetical. On the other hand, competing truths and emerging meanings give power relations

their conflicting character. As long as this conflict remains in motion and keeps avoiding fixation and domination power can operate within agonistic politics. Danger emerges the moment there is an attempt to resolve this positive agonistic interaction and disrupt its dynamic course in order to control unpredictable results and unify meaning in conditions of domination.

Since sovereign power has been dominant in political thought, a tendency arose to place all negative, coercive manifestations of power under the notion of sovereign power and conflate them with the notion of power in general. Foucault's distance from such poor tautology allowed him to detect and uncover a type of power which operates positively and is not fully covered by the umbrella notion of state power. For Foucault, power is just a name that we offer each time to different practices and knowledges; sovereign power is merely one of these, and it makes no sense to try and identify the general term "power" with merely one context of practices. Nevertheless, the question that arises is whether between sovereign power and biopower one of them can be seen as normatively preferable on the basis of being *less* prone to violence. Prozorov (2007) suggests that the basic difference is not in the inherently violent or benevolent character of these powers, but in the fact that the transcendental violence of the law is replaced in biopolitics by the immanent power of the norm. The latter does not threaten life itself but intervenes in restructuring its processes, so that if sovereign power is terrifying, biopolitical violence is suffocating. In a more graphic description, if sovereign violence entails the infliction of unbearable pain on a living being, biopolitical violence makes life itself unbearable (ibid, p.108). The section that follows is an attempt to reveal some of the ways in which this "immanent power of the norm" operates in biopolitics and the ways in which biopolitical violence can be suffocating by negating the subject's potential.

Biopolitical successes and failures and the violent shaping of subjectivities

This section discusses forms of neoliberal violence to facilitate an understanding of how biopower can engage in both optimising and harmful processes. By focusing on the main principles of neoliberal biopolitics it can be revealed that biopolitical violence may not always appear as evident, large-scale and brutal, but is still takes many forms in the process of shaping subjects, either by disciplining them or by conditioning them. Overall, these instances of violence can be broadly approached through their common function in negating the subject's potential for genuine action. Before proceeding, it has to be noted that the purpose here is not to observe practices of violence as externally linked to governmental rationales. By following Oksala (2011, p.476), I espouse the view that 'the danger of neoliberal violence lies in the fact that 'it effectively depoliticises violence by turning it into an essentially economic rather than a political or moral issue'. For this reason, I assume that neoliberal violence and biopolitical violence coincide in the practices discussed here, therefore the terms "neoliberal" and "biopolitical" are used interchangeably in the context of "neoliberal biopolitics".

One of the greatest concerns of modern politics is undoubtedly development. The concept of development, being contingent, has evolved considerably over time. From development understood purely in economic terms, neoliberal societies utilise the concept of "human development", and "sustainable development" largely in accordance with biopolitical rationales that target human life and its environment. Criteria of development such as those of the UN's Human Development Index reveal a clear goal to enhance human life in multiple aspects. To turn development into a means capable of optimising human life makes perfect sense with regard to the positive and productive character of biopower. Nevertheless, the aim of this analysis is to discuss biopolitical rationales that bear violence against the subjects they

shape. ‘Power constitutes the subject in the sense of forming the grid of intelligibility for its actions, intentions, desires and motivations’ (Oksala, 2005, p.95). In maintaining this perspective, I want to argue that development, instead of a means to the end of human progress, is presented as the end of neoliberal politics, hence turning subjective action into a means. This becomes instantly problematic given that, at least in the context of this thesis, the only possible end of politics, if any, can be action itself.

Since development is a ubiquitous term that changes constantly to match neoliberal policy, one has to approach it not in terms of a definition but by uncovering its functions and effects. In presenting itself to be concerned with the human, one interesting suggestion is that development can be translated into a process of gaining “adaptive capabilities” (Chandler and Raid, 2016). In this sense, development’s concern is for humans, and therefore their practices, to be efficient and responsive towards challenges in the course of developmental processes. This implies that development is not just a material factor but a process with which the subject engages first and foremost internally. In the same manner that the biological body grows older and matures, or scientific laws evolve without human intervention, development is also seen as a natural process that will march its own way, as long as humans adapt to it and do not hinder it, hence the need to adapt. This peculiar tautology, that humanity develops and therefore human development is achieved, serves to obscure the power that shapes and politically guides both development and the subject; development appears as just a fact, a truth experienced within reality. Therefore, in observing the course of development as such, the rationales that explain it appear even more valid.

Chandler and Raid (ibid) in a thorough discussion of development as adaptability claim that neoliberalism produces degraded subjects, defined by diminished capabilities for autonomy

and agency, exactly because autonomy is understood as a threat. As explained already, action is inherently unpredictable and irreversible, and all previous chapters have shown that efforts to control the unpredictability of action necessarily become violent towards the subject. If development is seen as an external process that independently evolves within a linear history with the perpetual goal of progress, autonomous action threatens it because of the unpredictability that potential brings: things may happen in a certain way, but also, they might happen differently, or they might not happen at all. This is an enormous risk that can threaten the predetermined course of development and deny the rationales that support it. This is where violence comes in as a response to such threat. As discussed earlier, biopolitical violence emerges as a necessity to protect the well-being of the population and ensure its security. Biopolitical violence does not present itself as fighting potential, but hijacks potential by turning it into a different concept. Therefore, human potential is for neoliberal biopolitics the potential to develop according to specific rationales and in a predetermined manner; what developmental goals are is not open to debate. Subjects need to adapt to such processes to achieve potential and biopolitics claims to serve human potential in this manner.

The limitations of this argument can be exposed by summoning up the analysis of Arendt's concept of natality. As discussed, Arendt associated natality with the introduction of "beginners" to both biological and political life. Those newcomers are in a sense Others whose action can bring up something new as they disclose themselves to the world. By allowing dialogue and shared action with these Others, individuals interact to shape a common world within relations of power. Individuals consequently accept that this world is one of potential and therefore without a determined future and come to terms with unpredictability for the sake of creating shared meaning and becoming/remaining free. This is not much different to historical progress, when development comes as unpredictability and potential is open and

dynamic. Contrary to adapting to circumstances, the human task is that of action and change, and the only meaningful responsibility in this context is what Arendt calls *promise.* Together with the possibility of forgiveness, promise–simplified– is the confirmation that subjects adhere to the principles of action and change; relations of power are meant to remain open and beginners to be welcomed. In this sense, biopolitical violence represses natality by preventing beginners from free action, by turning beginners into followers and the responsibility towards openness into a responsibility to control and manage. Diprose and Ziarek's (2018) work is dedicated to exploring the tensions between biopolitics and natality and reveals that biopolitical techniques function through normalisation of subjects and present a great danger to human agency. The purpose of biopolitical violence is to 'eliminate randomness and unpredictability on both the collective and the individual levels' (ibid, p.141). This confirms that biopolitical violence functions as a negation of the subject's potential. Such negation can be observed through various techniques which are backed by dominant neoliberal rationalities.

Some of the most prominent traits of neoliberalism are market fundamentalism and the fetishisation of competition, financialisation of narratives that emphasise investment and human capital, and a prevailing sense of insecurity that requires the responsibilisation of the subject (Gilbert, 2013). The logic of competition is reflected upon both the subject and the community. One the one hand, civil society is required to function in a way that serves the objectives and logic of neoliberalism; one the other hand, the subject has become the new *homo economicus* whose role is to maximise human capital as the "entrepreneur of the self" (Lazzarato, 2009). With the help of discourses of competition neoliberal politics create a binary of success and failure. Subjects' action is restricted within successfully managing themselves according to externally imposed goals, while the emphasis on responsibility implies that a deviation from such role accounts for failure.

However, the binary of success and failure should not be understood as a binary of inclusion and exclusion. Instead, there is an increased number of subjects who are neither insiders not outsiders due to the fact that neoliberal apparatuses apply entrepreneurial norms but can also suspend this application for those who threaten to harm profitability (Christiaens, 2018). This does not mean that biopolitical violence does not have exclusionary effects; rather subjects are excluded from certain processes while remaining included in the wider system of biopolitics. Oksala (2011, p.479) explains how 'for the economic rationality of market-mechanisms to extend maximally throughout society, the possibilities for engaging in practices with alternative, non-economic rationalities must be restricted, by violent means if necessary'. Therefore, the categorisation of subjects into successes and failures may lead to being subjected to different forms of practices; however, irrespectively of whether the rules are broken or not, the ultimate threat of violence is the inability to "exit" the game. In other words, the violence that negates the potential for alternative action is aimed against both successful and unsuccessful neoliberal subjects.

The major explanation for this has to do with the fact that neoliberal subjects are defined as human capital. Biopower conditions and protects human life exactly because life is essential to its existence. Following from this, to allow subjects to fully "exit" biopolitical reality–liberate themselves from it– would imply a huge and permanent loss of human capital, besides the risk of unpredictability that human agency bears as explained above. Subjects are early on moulded into human capital by being encouraged to embrace this identity in various aspects of their roles. This can be observed, for example, in how the neoliberalisation of academia promotes the narrative of human capital with the purpose of increasing productivity and employment prospects. In the neoliberal university, students are "educated" into neoliberal subjects from

the moment they manage their application for admission, to the continuous processes of review and evaluation both of themselves and others and to their everyday routines in highly marketised campuses (Houghton, 2019). Under the logic of human capital, all human activity dictates a careful cost benefit analysis and is goal oriented towards some form of economic benefit. Not only employability but labour itself can be seen as an investment for future career prospects or a type of entrepreneurial activity (Kiersey, 2009). The idea of necessity has retreated, not because of genuine and widespread prosperity, but because it is now seen as an investment. Working for survival is placed in terms of working on the self and this shift of focus from the relational to the internal makes arguments for exploitation and inequality incomprehensible. In this context resistance has no place; to resist the reality of labour is to resist self-improvement which is considered irrational.

Further to this logic, political and social debates on social crises are always accompanied with the view that all crises bear opportunities whether that is financial gain or skills improvement. These opportunities, however, are not related to a broad sense of potential but merely enable a "correct" response to these dynamics of reality that appear to operate independently of human action. Hence, crises just "occur" normally at best, or are brought about by those who intervene irresponsibly in the processes of development. Arguably, since neoliberal biopolitics advocate freedom there is no point in engaging in a discussion of locating the exact root of the crisis, given the *laissez faire* function of the market; that would only vaguely point towards the irresponsible or irrational behaviour of individuals. The only option that remains for the subject is to embrace the natural cycle of crises and adapt accordingly, under the constant reminder of the danger that unpredictability and human agency bear.

Accordingly, in biopolitical societies, one term that has become very fashionable is that of resilience. This term does not seem to have a specific content other than "endurance" in facing risk and uncertainty associated with modern life crises. Larner and Moreton (2016) have suggested that resilience, despite being a ubiquitous term, should not be abandoned to neoliberal practices and instead its empowering potential for individuals and communities should be promoted. This can be achieved by associating resilience not with 'the prudential subjects of neoliberalism who calculate the costs and benefits of risks of acting in a particular way' but instead with a mode of thought that 'emphasises adaptability and flexibility' (ibid, p.51). However, adaptability and flexibility are themselves part of the neoliberal rationale that prevents subjects from opting-out of it. Without looking at the contingent meaning and discursive context of resilience, it becomes impossible to realise that it only serves to alleviate the impact of the very violence that promotes it. In other words, biopolitical violence is kind enough to provide a remedy for itself by encouraging subjects to persist and remain alive in the struggle with neoliberal practices. Therefore, biopolitical violence does indeed have the effect of "suffocation" mentioned at the end of the previous section.

Promoting the idea of resilience is a technique of suffocating the subject by assigning it the burden of full responsibility of two types: responsibility for alleviating the violence it experiences and responsibility to maintain a successful interaction with neoliberal practices, in violent conditions, without deviating from their rationale. With the relocation of responsibility already mentioned in the previous section, individuals are ultimately responsible for their own success and failures which depend upon their capacity to adapt to incomprehensible market forces and their resilience against uncertainty and insecurity (Mavelli, 2016). Responsibility for one's own success and failure is arguably the only sense of freedom the biopolitical subject has, which is wholly dependent upon "playing with the rules" and accepting to be both self-

managed and disciplined when necessary. As explained earlier, Foucault does not replace disciplinary power with biopower, but sees them in coexistence.

The most flagrant manifestation of disciplinary power in the context of biopolitics can be seen in what De Lissovoy (2012) calls a "carceral turn" in describing how a culture of blame and responsabilisation has led to a tendency towards excessive punishment and criminalisation. Subjects who fail to put up with neoliberal demands in various ways are incarcerated and hence deprived of even the modest capacity for action that biopolitical subjects hold. Due to managing themselves unsuccessfully, "failed subjects" pose a threat of revealing the contradictions in the neoliberal discourse of successful self-entrepreneuring; they are left to be managed by the biopolitical state under conditions in which violence and optimisation, discipline and biopower, coexist. Biopolitical rationale presents this "management of failure" as humane, scientific and efficient; between sessions of torture, the dietary preferences of "enemy combatants" in detention centres are respected and private prisons are presented as means to "livelihood for prospective employees" (ibid, p. 745). In other words, responsibilisation, far from being an innocent practice, is tied less to a positive commitment for personal growth and more to a guilt for failing to do so.

This is dictated by the wider biopolitical principle of market competition. Despite the promotion of successful self-enterpreneuring as open to all, competition dynamics do not guarantee that the number of opportunities is sufficient. 'The rationale of the market and market competition becomes a biopolitical principle which suggests that 'some will triumph, and some will die' (Brown, 2015, p.65). Once power relations become a matter of life and death violence emerges in them and the danger of domination becomes real, exactly because stakes are so high in outcomes of success and failure. Biopolitics conceal the dangers inherent in competition by linking it to a positive notion of meritocracy. Readiness towards opportunities and commitment

to self-management will somehow guarantee a successful outcome. However, neoliberal meritocracy can be inherently exclusionary, if understood through the image of the "social ladder"; being on top implies a bottom (Littler, 2018). Even though neoliberalism seems to guarantee fair play, the hierarchical character of meritocracy shows how success necessarily implies failure. Meritocracy is not just about questions of inequality, to which there is usually a vague answer that emphasises "natural" talent, but mostly about the system that, in the first place, trusts inequalities to sustain its principle of competition. Meritocracy is employed discursively to blur these inequalities and place the guilt on the subject instead of challenging the rationale that shapes it.

Therefore, inequality is presented as a result of competition–its outcomes of success or failure–instead of its prerequisite. Uneven development is a blatant proof of this with poor countries competing over exploitation from wealthy countries. The merits of advanced knowledge and technology, the means of success, are not accessible to those "left behind" who, nevertheless, are still included in the functions of this system. A contemporary example can be found in Sassen (2017) who explains how cargo shipping industry makes use of highly sophisticated knowledge and technology but disposes its obsolete products in poor countries where they are dismantled by hand by low paid workers. Biopolitics operate in zones of complex knowledge and technology which exist side by side to zones of extreme degradation of both living standards and the environment. Still, both zones are under the umbrella of biopolitics and operate according to neoliberal discourses of development and market competition. "Failed" states, similar to biopolitical subjects, are disciplined in various ways under the control of biopower which, despite claims of bringing these countries back to the path of development, only seem to be managing them as potential threats to political stability. The violence that torments such countries is consistently presented as a result of corruption, poor management

and lack of adaptability to developmental challenges, which are in turn deeply rooted not in the global economic system but in their incompatible culture and values.

For both countries and individuals, the requirement of responsibility is often presented in financial terms: financialisation of neo-liberal societies demands "financially responsible" subjects. Gilbert (2020) provides an interesting insight of shaping subjectivities through the responsibilisation of refuges. Her case study reveals how refugees need to develop micro-accounting skills to reimburse loans offered for their transportation costs. Lack of information and support on financial tasks, together with emotions of fear and shame involved in lack of understanding of complex financial processes, lead individuals to do their own research and make themselves familiar with loan programs. This allows them to be integrated as "successful" neoliberal subjects, as opposed to those who have not yet managed to prove themselves as such and remain restricted in camps, managed as a mass of biopolitical life. It could be argued that financial credibility has become as important–if not more– as holding citizenship. In contrast, those who lack financial credibility are perceived as threats of unpredictability and instability. Lazzarato (2011) has explored in much detail debt as a technique of financial securitisation that requires subjects to "honour" their debt and become entrepreneurs of themselves. This questions the extent to which debt is just an external threat to capitalist economies and exposes it as a biopolitical construct. There seems to be a peculiar connection between debt and discipline, according to which, debt is both an economic technique to sustain aggregate demand and the unpredictable effect of risk-taking entrepreneuring that needs to be managed through self-discipline (Mahmud, 2012). As a result, the majority of those who are required to discipline themselves are continuously indebted in an effort to cover necessities of everyday life.

Overall, the practices of resposnibilisation of subjects and their categorisation into successes and failures appears to generate various forms of violence. This violence can be both physical and psychological; after all, the entrepreneurial lifestyle can make the subject suffer physical violence in a less obvious psychosomatic manner. Even for those who embrace the idea of the entrepreneurial self and claim to have chosen their living and working standards, various health hazards, insomnia, depression, prescription drug addiction and fatigue may be experienced as a result of a demanding reality (Biebricher and Johnson, 2012). This is not to say that the demands of life are to be presented as a form of violence which is specifically neoliberal; instead, the problem lies in the paradoxical relation between demands, responsibilisation and the subject's limited potential for genuine action. First of all, there is a paradox in recognising the unpredictability of a complicated and rapidly changing world, while demanding from subjects to engage in goal-oriented decision making. Secondly, it is further paradoxical to tie down action with the responsibility for action's unforeseeable effects, especially when action is not open to its full potential but restricted to a particular repertoire. In simple terms, violence lies in the demand to live and produce meaningful responses to the reality of life, when the subject is prevented from creating new realities and beginning anew. The impossible rationality of neoliberal biopolitics is the demand to constantly follow the same set of rules but to expect different outcomes of the play.

Finally, the shaping of subjectivities is an inherently violent process when it assumes in advance that some subjects must be the winners so that others will be the losers. Entrepreneurial rules are made on a one-size-fits-all approach that prevents plurality exactly because of its success/failure binary. Queer theory offers an interesting perspective that challenges the dichotomy of winners and losers which ties self-responsibilisation to failure. Taking as an example the concept of 'debility' assigned to subjects who 'simply persist without getting

better', Shildrick (2015) criticises the intrusive logic of rehabilitation that comes with a range of market commodities bearing the promise of "therapeutic interventions". The point is not that "getting better" is undesirable but that, as Butler suggests, vulnerability should not be equated solely with injurability (ibid, p.88). The problem with biopower is that it aims to optimise life but not all lives can be optimised in the same manner.

Biopolitics are concerned with biological life, condition and protect it. But in fact, some lives are considered "optimisable" while others are seen as "trouble". Neoliberal biopolitics set out strict demands to fully responsible subjects and categorise them into successes and failures. Those who succeed are in any case restricted to operate within a specific context of action, while their success is constantly renegotiated. Therefore, at any point they might be categorised as failures, so their action is entirely cyclical and incapable of creating anything new. Those who fail are deemed irresponsible and a threat to biopolitical and neoliberal rationales. "Failed subjects" are still not entirely placed outside the biopolitical context but continue to be under the control of biopower. This exclusion which remains an inclusion can be understood in terms of a "zone of indistinction" which is what characterises biopolitics for Giorgio Agamben. The next section briefly discusses his work on biopolitics in order to approach biopolitical violence through the notion of the *homo sacer*.

Biopolitical violence: Agamben's *homo sacer* in the zone of indistinction

Agamben engages closely with Foucauldian biopolitics but expresses the will to "correct" it by claiming that biopolitics is not a modern phenomenon, rather it has always been a function of sovereign power. Therefore, the sovereign state and its legal exception are central in Agamben's analysis. As discussed earlier, Foucault's genealogical method refuses the project of uncovering an origin in the past and aims at following the transformation of power relations

and rationalities. This is a stark difference with Agamben who discusses the origins of the sovereign state and hence dismisses its contingent character. Nevertheless, Agamben does claim that modernity is the historical and political context that made this sovereign function obvious, because of the state of exception becoming a permanent political reality. One main explanation for the discrepancy between Agamben and Foucault's accounts is that Agamben does so through his study of Benjamin and Schmitt, both of whom worked on the idea of sovereignty.

In Schmitt's work, sovereign is the power that decides on the state of exception. This means that in case of an emergency, the sovereign has the power to suspend the existing legal order and violate norms as long as it faces a crisis. Agamben suggests that Schmitt's Political Theology can be used to present the theory of the state of exception as a theory of sovereignty (Agamben, 2005, p.35). What Agamben found appealing was an interplay of limits in the form of exclusion which is also an inclusion. The decision on the exception is beyond the law, therefore it can suspend it, but at the same time the exception is what makes the "rule" of law possible; it is a case of defining something by its opposite. To transform the state of exception into a theory of sovereignty, Agamben reads the importance of exception within the context of biopolitics so that exceptionalism becomes a strategic biopolitical device. Sovereign power establishes itself by producing and excluding subjects from its rule, but because of this it still maintains its power on what it excludes, therefore subjects are still under the control of sovereign power. This is the point where the figure of the *homo sacer* becomes relevant and has to be explained alongside the concept of bare life.

Agamben initially approaches life as Arendt does, through the Aristotelian concepts of political *bios* and biological *zoe*. Agamben follows Foucault in the realisation that from viewing these

two as distinct characteristics of the human as a living animal with additional capacity for political existence, in modernity, biopolitics question the political character of the human being and bestialise it, reduce it to its biological element. But Agamben is unhappy with Foucault's explanation of how sovereign power and biopower are combined. Instead, he puts forward his own take on the two manifestations of power in his work *Homo Sacer*:

> The present inquiry concerns precisely this hidden point of intersection between the juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models of power. What this work has had to record among its likely conclusions is precisely that the two analyses cannot be separated, and that the inclusion of bare life in the political realm constitutes the original–if concealed–nucleus of sovereign power. It can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power. In this sense, biopolitics is at least as old as the sovereign exception. Placing biological life at the center of its calculations, the modern State therefore does nothing other than bring to light the secret tie uniting power and bare life, thereby reaffirming the bond (Agamben, 1998, p.6).

Homo sacer is, according to Roman law, the sacred figure of somebody who has committed a crime and can be killed with impunity but cannot be sacrificed. This poses as a paradox for Agamben who thinks, however, that the *homo sacer* can shed light exactly on the concealed limit between the sphere of the divine and the sphere of the state. Agamben explains that sacredness takes the form of a double exception from both spheres of the profane and the religious. This double exception signifies a double exclusion coinciding with a double capture; *homo sacer* then operates in a manner similar to that of the sovereign:

> Just as the law, in the sovereign exception, applies to the exceptional case in no longer applying and in withdrawing from it, so homo sacer belongs to God in the form of unsacrificeability and is included in the community in the form of being able to be killed. Life that cannot be sacrificed and yet may be killed is sacred life (Agamben, 1998, p.82).

The double exclusion is the key notion in the figure of *homo sacer* and what links this figure to the concept of violence. In a sense, *homo sacer* is killed through exclusion, as violence occurs outside both human and divine law. This is possible because, as the logic of exclusion/inclusion implies, there is nothing outside the law: the original relation between life

and the law, is one of abandonment, or else, the ban (ibid, p.29). This life is not set outside of the ban, away from its reach, but it is, in a sense, "under the ban" and it is bare life. Bare life is the object of the inclusive exclusion and it is not the same as *zoe*, biological life, but it is a depoliticised version of it. In the same way that the *homo sacer* is expelled and stripped of the protection of the state, bare life has been stripped of *bios*. However, and again because of the exception, human life was politicised in the first place because of the (possibility of) abandonment. In other words, by deciding on the exception, the sovereign essentially decides where the limit between *bios* and *zoe* lies. Therefore, bare life, by being neither *bios*, nor *zoe*, it is a politicised form of natural life. 'Immediately politicised but nevertheless excluded from the *polis*, bare life is the limit-concept between the *polis* and the *oikos'* (Mills, 2008, p.64). This explains why Agamben claims that biopower is not a novelty of modernity but has always been the original political relation between the subject and the sovereign.

Agamben's concern is to overcome the exposure of bare life to violence which occurs exactly because of bare life's liminal character. As explained, violence is situated neither in the official political sphere nor in the separate religious one. Instead, violence occurs in what Agamben calls 'the zone of indistinction'. Agamben has portrayed Nazi Camps as the perfect example of biopolitical production of bare life. Given that for Agamben exclusion involves inclusion and exception becomes the rule, bare life that is placed at the margin of political order gradually coincides with it; exception and norm collapse into a zone of indistinction. Bare life and the violence that accompanies it are the original element of sovereign politics and remained obscured by political *bios* in conditions of inclusion/exclusion. With the emergence of modernity and biopower Agamben does not observe so much the inclusion of marginalised bare life into the biopolitical, but the process in which *homo sacer* as bare life becomes the

main experience of modern subjectivity; the process is one of continuity not schism (Downey, 2009). Increasingly, anyone can experience being a *homo sacer* in modern biopolitics.

Agamben instead of giving primacy to a specific sphere of life, he sees them as collapsing onto each other and introduces a third sphere that defuses them: the zone of indistinction. This is a space that precedes the elements that enter it and allows a process that suspends the differences between two concepts. The process sounds like a form of dialectics, but this would not be compatible with a thinker like Agamben, inspired by Benjamin, advocating "pure means" and in general suspicious of teleological structures. Agamben does approach history dialectically but instead of looking ahead to a telos, he looks backwards at the process and tries to uncover a "foundational split" so that the dialectic can be explored and deactivated, hence rejecting all binaries (Murray, 2010, p.33). This explains both his engagement and quasi-reversal of Foucauldian biopolitics from the perspective of his method.

Another reason behind Agamben's conceptualisation of the zone of indistinction is that he investigates power through his key concept of potentiality. Agamben follows Aristotle in seeing potential as a capability both of being and of not being. Every human power (dynamis) is also adynamia, in other words impotentiality (Agamben, 1999a, p.182). Interestingly, this implies a reflection of Foucauldian power relations–power and resistance– internally, on each pole of the relationship. We could apply potentiality on power relations by saying that dominant power maintains its own impotentiality, while resistance does the same. This could bring up Agamben's understanding of freedom as potentiality which is tied to power relations, in accordance to Foucault and Arendt: 'To be free is not simply to have power to do this or that thing, nor is it simply to have the power to refuse to do this or that thing. To be free is to be capable of one's own impotentriality' (ibid, p.183). In the zone of indistinction humans

represent bare life and the liminal status suggests they are trapped in that zone; the sovereign exception ensures that there is nothing outside of it.

There are two problems associated with this. First, Agamben's view on potentiality implies that sovereign power can maintain itself indefinitely without passing to actuality. Agamben takes Aristotle's claim that "what is not impossible is possible" as more than a banality. He suggests this clearly states that impotentiality preserves itself while passing to actuality. Accordingly, the passage from potentiality to actuality functions not as a mere transition from the one to the other, but in preserving potentiality as indistinguishable from actuality (Calarco, 2007). Indeed, Agamben conceptualises the zone of indistinction by seeing the sovereign ban and the structure of potentiality as closely interrelated:

> (…) the sovereign ban, which applies to the exception in no longer applying, corresponds to the structure of potentiality, which maintains itself in relation to actuality precisely through its ability not to be. Potentiality (in its double appearance as potentiality to and as potentiality not to) is that through which Being founds itself sovereignly, which is to say, without anything preceding or determining it (…) other than its own ability not to be (Agamben, 1998, p.46).

The sovereign is the actuality of impotentiality because it manages to draw the limits of the law without ever crossing them and include the law within its exteriority. *Homo sacer* is also the actuality of impotentiality because it represents bare life, the existence of what cannot exist (Brown, 2013). Furthermore, this means that sovereignty is the original mode in which Being is established; a sovereign act is one that "gives itself to itself" and, therefore, the production of bare life is the originary act of the sovereign that lets itself be (Hutchinson, 2008, p.51). This presents us with the second problem; bare life as the original form of life in sovereignty. Agamben insists on bare life and sovereignty as the roots of violence that hold ontological importance. Given the bleak reality of the state of exception, it should be impossible to separate the plain fact of living from the form that life takes because then there is always the violent

danger of reducing one to bare life. Agamben uses the term "form of life" instead, to suggest an emancipatory notion of life in unity which makes impossible to single out bare life from actual existence (Ugilt, 2014, p.41). This emancipation is a move away from divisions of life and from the sovereign that produces them.

The notion of bare life originates in Benjamin's work in his *Critique of Violence*, also translated as "mere life". Perhaps a very brief description of bare life in Benjamin's terms can give a better context of how Agamben associates the source of violence with sovereignty. Benjamin uses the term mythical violence to describe extra-juridical means that establish the rule of law. Mythical violence consists of two types of violence; law-making violence creates the state, the territory on which the law is established, and law-preserving violence protects it through the rule of the exception. This means that both these types of violence are means to the end of establishing and preserving the law. Divine violence is Benjamin's response to mythical violence as a violence which is not means. It is called divine violence because 'in all spheres God opposes myth' therefore divine violence opposes mythical violence (Benjamin, 2007, p.282). Divine violence is oppositional by destroying the law, clearing the political from boundaries, and breaks the cycle of the exception; it is a cleansing force without "blood" because it is not concerned with bare life:

> In annihilating, it also expiates, and the deep connection between the lack of bloodshed and the expiatory character of this violence is unmistakeable. For blood is the symbol of mere life. The dissolution of legal violence stems (…) from the guilt of more natural life, which consigns the living, innocent and unhappy, to a retribution that "expiates" the guilt of mere life–and doubtless also purifies the guilty, not of guilt, however, but of law. For with mere life the rule of law over the living ceases. Mythical violence is bloody power over mere life for its own sake, divine violence is pure power over all life for the sake of the living (ibid).

It is Benjamin before Agamben arguing against the separation between bare life and form of life. Sovereign violence is what creates bare life under the promise of securing survival. It is in

a sense the same process of inserting life necessity in the political sphere, which is what Arendt also argued against. Perhaps this is why Benjamin conceptualised a very distinct for of violence to counter sovereign violence; one that is not concerned with bare life. For Benjamin bare life cannot and should not be a holder of political agency (Nedoh, 2017, p.71). It becomes clear that Benjamin's contribution to Agamben's understanding of biopolitics is crucial. Agamben embraced the idea of divine violence and the problematisation of bare life and worked on it alongside the state of exception in order to explain the danger that posed to the political if life is to be managed as a biological element. The sacredness of life is a dangerous idea because by submitting oneself to sovereign power to ensure the preservation of biological life, one gives sup the potential for form of life and for action (Ugilt, 2014).

Agamben does not offer a complete solution to biopolitical violence but puts forwards the idea of a new ontology of potentiality beyond the sovereign paradox (Brown, 2013). A helpful example Agamben offers is the story of Bartleby the Scrivener whose constant response to everyday meetings in the matrix of powers is "I would rather not to". The importance of this is that he does not say that he *will* not do something or that he *cannot* do it; "I would rather not to" allows Bartleby to retain his potentiality, to not engage with the norm. This is compatible with Foucauldian resistance as it also aims at keeping power and resistance open and dynamic. As a practice, it frees the passage to actuality from being the result of a decision that puts an end to the ambiguous character of potentiality. Agamben (1999a, p.254) explains: 'potentiality is not will, and impotentiality is not necessity'. Potentiality will not necessarily dissolve the sovereign ban in one strike, as the force of a divine violence would, but it helps bypass sovereign authority.

Agamben's view of biopolitics, especially his account of the subject's reduction to bare life and, consequently, of possible resistance to this, have been questioned in terms of compatibility with Foucauldian thought. As explained earlier, Agamben claimed to be inspired by Foucault but also attempted to add his own contribution to biopolitics. From the perspective of the current thesis, Agamben and Foucault share one major proximity and one substantial difference regarding violence. Both of them locate and are interested in violence within politics– biopolitics and beyond– although Foucault sees it as a contingent historical fact, while Agamben as an originary phenomenon embedded in Western metaphysics as a whole (Oksala, 2010). This may undoubtedly give rise to contradictions in the merging of a Foucauldian and Agambenean approach to power and resistance to biopolitics. However, as long as both thinkers point out ways in which biopolitical violence can be located and conceptualised, the tensions among them should not signify a complete incompatibility between them.

Ojakangas (2005) argues that the dialogue between Agamben and Foucault on biopower is an impossible one. This might be an overstatement but definitely Foucault's effort to take intellectual focus away from the sovereign and Agamben's response that drags the sovereign back in and even ontologises it as transhistorical and omnipresent cannot be anything less than a dissonance. Fortunately, Foucault (1982) has clearly stated that his main focus and interest is not power but the subject. As long as the Agamben also theorises bare life with the subject and subjectification in mind, then their approaches to biopolitics can at least be in a conversation from the scope of the subject. The question then is the ways and the extent to which the subject is affected by biopolitics. Ojakangas (2005, p.15) turns Agamben's concept of "form-of-life" against him in claiming that 'it is precisely this life, life as untamed power and potentiality, that biopower invests and optimises'. The criticism here lies in the fact that biopower and sovereign power cannot be seen as the same thing, as Agamben "discovers" in biopolitics, but

rather biopower is necessary a positive power that has nothing to do with killing. If this is true, then the whole discussion on the *Homo Sacer* as the main product of biopolitical violence is completely mistaken.

The problem lies in whether bare life can ever be biopolitical. Ojakangas (2005, p.12) for example answers that it is not possible because biopower sees life under a "synthetic" notion of an "invisible focal unity" which is why biopower is interested in optimising life. His main argument is that sovereign power can be discussed in a Foucauldian context but not as a synthesis with biopower; sovereign power is necessarily in "irreconcilable tension" with biopower. Instead of Agamben's example of the *homo sacer*, the biopolitical figure is 'the middle-class Swedish social-democrat' for Ojakangas (ibid, p.27). Nevertheless, it is not clear why the tension between sovereignty and biopower means that the figure of *homo sacer* is inapplicable to biopolitics. *Homo sacer* is a figure of violence within biopolitics, which is far from incompatible with Foucault, who never argued that violence is impossible in the context of life-celebrating biopower. For Foucault it is possible that violence becomes the instrument or result of biopower:

> Obviously the bringing into play of power relations does not exclude the use of violence any more than it does the obtaining of consent; no doubt the exercise of power can never do without one or the other, often both at the same time. But even though consensus and violence are the instruments or the results, they do not constitute the principle or the basic nature of power (Foucault, 1982, p.789)

Moreover, Agamben discusses bare life not so much because he is concerned with biological death but because he observes a form of political death and the fragmentation of life through its politicisation and depoliticisation. It has to be noted here, that Ojakangas misinterpreted Agamben's "form of life" in appropriating it to describe a unitary form of life under the benevolence of biopower. Agamben, in trying to explore the conditions of a form of life, looked

into monasticism. It is true that Agamben used the term "form of life" to describe life that is inseparable from its form, in the sense that bare life is something impossible to identify, however, this life should be one "entirely removed from the grasp of law" and, more importantly, one which is 'never given as property but only as a common use' (Agamben, 2011, p. xiii). Seemingly, Agamben's goal is to imagine a form of life without objectification.

The question is whether an escape from the grasp of law requires a constant escape–or resistance– to biopower. The escape from the law cannot be separate here from an escape from the norm, especially when read within Agamben's exploration of monastic rule of life. With the increasing regulatory character of the law and its role in normalisation–as opposed to its place in the traditional jurisdictional system– 'the setting of norms and the application of norms are no longer distinguishable' (Oliwniak, 2009, p.41). This means that the criteria of classification of the category of the *homo sacer* are both the norm and its application; it is the norm that decides the application of itself. Therefore, Agamben's objection to the violence against *homo sacer* goes beyond liberation from state violence and its right to kill, in order to include liberation from the formation of the subject in its very essence as bare life. To that extent, Agamben is not far from Foucault who was far from indifferent to the sovereign's capacity to affect subjectivity:

> The political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state and from the state's institutions but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries (Foucault, 1982, p.785).

The possible knot between Agamben and Foucault though, could be the notion of bare life as a category that essentialises the subject itself. There are two possible concerns based on this. First of all, Leps, (2012) warns that biopower and sovereignty cannot be seen as inseparable in the ability to reduce life to bare life, because biopower still needs a notion of life that

corresponds to its aims. In other words, there is danger that bare life is portrayed as incapacitated, so that it cannot be the object of positive power exercise, that is biopolitics. Sovereign power could unleash its destructive force upon life but biopower necessarily requires a certain benevolence towards life, even if violence remains as a threat. This point coincides with and furthers the previous criticism on the productivity of biopower. However, as already explained, Agamben does not equate bare life with either *bios* or *zoe*; by placing bare life in the zone of indistinction, Agamben portrays it as both politicised and depoliticised, which means that bare life in biopolitics is not paradoxical as long as it is liminal. Criticisms towards bare life in biopolitics are not concerned with the validity of the sovereign exception, therefore do not deny the possibility of political life on the limit between inclusion and exclusion. It is within this liminal space that biopower can both preserve and restrict bare life.

The second concern, however, is more problematic and crucial in understanding Agamben's work within Foucauldian biopolitics. By arguing that bare life can be liberated from state and violent identification, through transformation to form-of-life, Agamben tries to turn the negativity of *homo sacer* into a positive indetermination, an existence over which power has no hold anymore (Genel, 2006). This is in essence an effort to decouple politics from power, which is definitely incompatible with Foucauldian biopolitics. Agamben tries to provide a resolution to biopolitics, which is no longer political but ethical or metaphysical (ibid, p.60). Furthermore, since bare life is simultaneously politicised and depoliticised, it is unclear how it can break off from power relations, unless by being transformed, which would still require some sort of power being exercised. Assuming that bare life cannot be placed outside power relations from a Foucauldian perspective, it becomes necessary to anchor its potential for resistance within biopolitics; this is possible as long as its political character is confirmed.

Homo sacer as the "failure" of neoliberal biopolitics

In order to facilitate the above discussion, I wish to bring the figure of the *homo sacer* as bare life into the context of the biopolitical neoliberal violence discussed in the previous section. By placing emphasis on the liminal political character of bare life and without denying its place in the grid of power relations, we can observe the violent shaping of subjectivity as bare life within biopolitical societies. The figure of biopolitics does not have to be neither the prisoner of the camp, nor the middle-class Westerner, because biopolitical violence is neither strictly destructive nor purely benevolent. Since Foucault admitted an overlap of different types of power in modernity–sovereign or not–and since he placed the exercise of such powers hand in hand with the rise of neoliberalism, it makes sense to understand *homo sacer* as the "failure" of neoliberal biopolitics. *Homo sacer* has indeed committed a crime and so remains without rights and protection, abandoned in the zone of indistinction; this crime is the failure to follow successfully the dictates of biopolitical rationalities, which automatically turns the failed subject into a threat to them. As argued in the previous section, all subjects are shaped and affected by the various technologies of biopower, and they experience violence as far as their potential for creative action is hijacked and hence limited. However, especially individuals who fail to perform within neoliberal rationales experience a depoliticisation of their failure–responsibilisation playing a crucial role in this–and are confronted either with disciplinary practices, or with total abandonment, without this meaning that they are free to exit biopolitical relations.

The neoliberal biopolitical subject who has failed to manage life successfully can be approached through the term "*homo dolorosus*" that Wells (2019, p.417) has coined to describe the one who, unlike the *homo sacer*, cannot be killed but remains always 'available to be made to suffer'. Wells provides some useful contemporary examples to describe biopolitical

democracies which become illiberal by maintaining both their appeal to liberal values and life optimisation and their resort to domination. One of the examples provided is Israel's policy of keeping the economy in Gaza at its lowest level possible while making sure to avoid a large-scale humanitarian crisis, which would go against biopolitical principles. Another example is those detained in Guantanamo Bay who cannot be prosecuted but are still perceived as a threat, so they are denied both legal rights and death. These detainees 'hover in a weird liminal space of indefinite suffering' (ibid). It is true that for Foucault the prison represented a specifically disciplinary set of practices. However, within the biopolitical context, one who is detained without actual responsibility of a crime committed, can be seen as what Diken and Laustsen (2002) call the "hostage" of biopolitics; the individual who is placed in the state of exception associated with terrorism. Furthermore, the fact that an imprisoned subject becomes the body of both disciplinary power and biopower, only confirms in practice the peculiar coexistence of different types of power and violence in biopolitical modernity.

The "zones" in which failed subjects can be found are various, but they are all zones of indistinction in the sense that subjects within them are not outside the grip of biopower, but still their lives are not optimised by it. Life enjoys significance and protection for those who appear willing to live it in biopolitical terms, which seems the rational thing to do; everyone else is merely an irrational, defunct existence. To paraphrase Oksala's (2010, p.30) reading of Agamben, if 'homo sacer must die so that the rest of the political community may affirm the transcendence of their bodily, animal life', then the failed neoliberal subject must perish so that those who succeed affirm the rationalities of biopolitical life. The irrationality of those who do not succeed as biopolitical subjects, either because they cannot or because they refuse to, poses as an explanation for their violent living conditions, which resonates with the biopolitical view that violence is irrational. Thus, violence in biopolitics appears to be only the one that rests on

irrational subjects, while biopolitical violence itself poses as a legitimate defense of the rational against the irrational. Of course, there is nothing new in matching reason with terror, as discussed in Arendt's account of totalitarian logic. Any obstacle in the march towards the end, no matter if it concerns race, history, or human development, is always framed as irrational and dangerous.

Nothing can link better the forms of neoliberal biopolitical violence discussed earlier to the figure of the *homo sacer* as a failed subject than the concept of shame. At a first look, shame can be easily and immediately associated with the responsibilisation of the biopolitical entrepreneur, and obviously with the concept of failure itself. Hogget (2017) for example discusses shame as the emotion of professional failure that replaces guilt when it becomes internalised. Guilt may be associated with hurting others, but shame has to do with who the subject is. In the context of low professional performance, the neoliberal subject sees itself as inadequate and a failure, even though nobody is harmed from it, exactly because neoliberal subjectivities are shaped into having very low tolerance towards failure.

This is also evident in the "right to work" promoted by disability right's movements, as an effort to counter the feeling of shame for having an unruly corporeality (Soldatic and Morgan, 2017). This shame is based on this very logic of proving oneself through good performance, which seems to be the only way of achieving social value and avoid being associated with the welfare system. But perhaps the most serious and relevant of these contemporary examples is the case of shame for being unemployed. Feelings of guilt and shame due to unemployment not only prove once again the painful shaping of neoliberal subjects, but more importantly it reveals the depoliticisation of unemployment when shame indicates responsibility for failure (Sharone, 2007). As explained earlier, responsibilisation of the subject implies that one does

not only have to be shaped as *homo economicus*, but also needs to actively shape oneself as employable and entrepreneurial.

The interesting thing about the link between shame and unemployment is that something tied primarily to necessity is translated into a question of a subject's self-worth. This has not always been the case; for example, "refusal of work" was a central argument in 1970's social movements, which saw human potential not in working more, but in not having to work anymore (Popa, 2017). This view is much closer to the Arendtian idea of "freedom from necessity" which allows one to spend time for interaction within the political sphere: the difference between the *homo laborans* and a political human being. However, neoliberal biopolitics have arguably depoliticised employment in the reverse manner; labour has been tied to power as human capital and also privatised through responsibility. In this way, by depoliticising employment, power and freedom are also depoliticised, decoupling themselves from resistance. With this confusion of human categories and practices, biopolitics have indeed blurred the limit between the private, the social, and the political.

Nevertheless, the example can bring the analysis to the heart of the *homo sacer* and bare life through the concept of shame. Shame has been theorised beyond its link to failure and success in the contemporary examples described above. Agamben has discussed shame in the context of the camp and bare life. Contrary to locating shame in the camps' witnesses as a form of guilt for having survived while others perished, or a mere repulsion towards inhuman violence, Agamben tried to locate shame in the subject within its essential structures. In the *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Agamben claims that shame:

> It is nothing less than the fundamental sentiment of being a subject, in the two apparently opposed senses of this phrase: to be subject and to be sovereign. Shame is what is produces in the absolute concomitance of subjectification and de-

> subjectification, self-loss and self-possession, servitude and sovereignty (Agamben, 1999b, p.107).

Witnesses of the holocaust felt shame in observing what happens to humans who become dehumanised. Hence, Agamben sees shame as the outcome of the separation between *bios* and *zoe*, therefore shame is intrinsic to bare life. One can witness the de-subjectification of subjectified life, through reduction to bare life, and recognise the possibility of seeing the self as bare life. This is what Agamben means by saying that in biopolitics we can all potentially become the *homo sacer*; there is shame intrinsic in being a subject because one is subjectified politically, outside of one's control. The only element that remains painfully familiar is bare biological life which can only be violently depoliticised. This idea of the internal tension in the recognition of human existence is not unfamiliar, as it has been discussed in the context of dialectics. Agamben practically adapted dialectics to the context of bare life to decipher the possibility of its existence in the first place:

> The master-slave dialectic here is the result not of a battle for life, but rather of an indefinite discipline, a meticulous and interminable process of instruction and apprentice in which the two subjects end by exchanging their roles (ibid, p.108).

Agamben explains recognition by emphasising de-subjectification instead of mere objectification and subjectification. As a result, the initial domination implied in the master-slave relationship becomes politicised. The idea of shame and subjectivity is not however purely Agambenean; Nietzsche has made a similar case regarding shame and biological life before him. Nietzsche claims that the origin of shame is the fact that we find the nature of human life repulsive:

> The inner workings of the body are declared to be disgusting and shameful by human beings because they are an inescapable reminder of the excessive, destructive manner of the world at large to which man is prey (Speirs, 2013, p.8).

This confirms that dehumanising violence reminds the being of what it means to be depoliticised, placed outside the political sphere and abandoned in the state of nature. The subject also becomes aware that its subjectivity was never entirely its own making but has been shaped by others. Biopolitics present one with the false impression that life is respected, and that progress can only make it more comfortable and secure. However, the necessity that rests behind all obligations of the *homo economicus* is a reminder that life is as such only within biopolitical rationales; once it becomes depoliticised not only it is found without worth, but it is abandoned to suffer in the zone of indistinction. Biopolitics have inversed the ideal of the "city-state" of freedom to the "state-city" of administration and governmentality, in which successful citizens have the right to participation by governing themselves, and the rest of the population assumes the status of "guests" or mere "inhabitants" at the margins of society; this can be observed from the banlieues of northern Paris to the polluted fields of West Africa (Gandy, 2006). The depoliticisation of these inhabitants is not an outcome of an Arendtian logic of excluding necessity from politics but of the exact opposite, that is the dominance of neoliberal and biopolitical necessity of development and life optimisation within politics. Therefore, shame is not the direct outcome of failure but instead the politicisation and depoliticisation of failure bring to the subject shame of the very element of subjectivity and expose its tie to necessity.

This process and its link to violence has been thoroughly revealed in the previous chapter and specifically in Fanon's exploration of the colonial violence against the subjectivity of the colonised. The colonised are dehumanised and the internalised inferiority, fear and guilt that Fanon analysed must be relevant to shame as discussed here. Linking Agamben's biopolitics to colonialism is not a new idea but has already been extensively theorised in thorough collective work edited by Svirsky and Bignall (2012, p.7): 'The state of exception and

biopolitics in Western liberal regimes [are] in explicit relation to the historical and actual existence of these phenomena in the context of colonial relations'. Fanon's "zone of non-being" has been exposed in the previous chapter in terms similar to these of the "zone of indistinction". These zones are imprisoning subjects in conditions of violence that negates their potential for creative action. The depoliticisation of the dominated does not imply the absence of power relations but a frozen process of recognition, which Fanon explains as a "loss" of subjectivity, while Agamben exposes the depoliticisation of it. Both thinkers, however, would agree that these subjectivities are strictly shaped into binaries–that both Agamben and Fanon rejected– and eventually lead to the dehumanisation of the dominated portrayed as "animal life".

In a similar way, Mbembe's response to biopolitics through "necropolitics" exposes slavery as one of the first paradigms of biopolitical experimentation (Mbembe, 2003). The plantation system is seen as a state of exception in which the slave is 'seen as property, therefore kept alive but in a "state of injury"' (ibid, p.22). Colonies are to be seen as extreme cases of biopolitical states of exception in which the law is always suspended and conflict and violence are permanent turning reality into constant warfare. This is not of course the case for the metropolis, a space in which democracy and progress are central in political discourse. Either because of their irrationality, or because of their failure to appear compatible to Western civilisation–but probably because of both– colonial subjects are the failed subjects of the imperial world; they always need to be ruled and managed because it is impossible to do so themselves. This logic has of course only got worse in neo-colonial politics, where countries face intervention and invasion under the excuse that they are "failed states" and danger the stability and progress of the rest of the–civilised and rational–world.

All these examples indicate that biopolitical violence, paradoxical as it may sound, is nevertheless a reality. The existence of "zones"–of violence, exception, indistinction, non-being– serve to exclude the objects of violence so that they can maintain their official sphere of rule violent-free. This is not possible to the extent that Foucault has warned that "power is everywhere". Biopolitics indicate great zeal in making violence appear as "the last resort", which of course makes little difference on the subjects that experience it. In the case of imperialism and colonialism, Western biopolitical powers slowly masked states of exception by introducing more institutions and bureaucracy to blend administration into violence.

An early example can be seen in Shenhav (2012) who describes the British Brigandage Commissions in Egypt, which initially held the task of combating insurgencies and later became institutionalised as population control. Harsh military measures and torture were increasingly and partially replaced by bureaucratic structures aiming at managing the countryside through censuses, taxation and movement restrictions (ibid, p.25). This is not far from more recent examples such as the presence of the US in Iraq and Afghanistan, whose populations' lives were to be optimised through liberation and democratisation on the condition that irrational, violent and therefore failed subjects who resisted had to be destroyed. After all, "zones of influence" everywhere around the world appear to have little difference to "zones of indistinction".

Therefore, an interest in biopolitics must necessarily involve a perceptive eye that can uncover violence which has been depoliticised. "Abandonment" is necessarily violent, although covertly, as long as there is no such thing as "the outside of politics": depoliticisation itself occurs within politics and no human interaction can be placed outside power relations. Extreme poverty in shantytowns, such as those in Argentina and elsewhere in the neoliberal world, has

been normalised and the shantytowns appear as moles that unexpectedly appeared in the body of development. These shantytowns are signs of the promise of a better biopolitical life: they were originally an entrance for individual participation in industrial capitalism (Grinberg, 2011). People would move to urban areas to find work and stay there temporally until relocating, until crises and unemployment turned these spaces into permanent accommodation for the failed. Governance in these spaces is biopolitical in the ugly sense: shantytowns are "allowed" to exist but all responsibility for necessary products and services has been abandoned to the inhabitants. The inaction of the powerful meets the inaction of the–much less–powerful but this does not imply the end of power relations. These power relations produce subjects whose potential for action is violently negated. Biopolitics, as any other form of politics, cannot be rid of violence as long as it aims at normalising subjectivities within rational straightjackets.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed Foucault's concept of biopolitics as well as Giorgio Agamben's interpretation of it. Despite the multiple intellectual differences between the two thinkers, the discussion has shown that biopolitical violence, paradoxical as it may sound, is not only possible but due to its latent character it can be very dangerous. The neoliberal biopolitical subject is shaped and regulated constantly by biopower; however, the subject is the primary responsible for complying with biopolitical rationalities and following the dictates of development. The rules of neoliberal capitalism demand the financialisation and marketisation of human life; individuals are expected to make the "right" rational choices. Instead of spontaneity, the spectrum of human potential is replaced by a binary of success and failure. Individuals are expected to manage themselves successfully but failure to do so does not imply

an exemption from the rules but violent dehumanization and depoliticization of subjectivity. I have shown that the human potential for action and the unpredictability it brings are seen as dangerous and irrational against biopolitical rationales and hence are violently negated. The depoliticised space in which biopolitical violence is found in its extreme form is a liminal one, where inclusion and exclusion coincide. Subjects of biopower constantly face the danger of dehumanization and depoliticization, and the proof of this is shame as they key sentiment of failure in biopolitics. With the addition of this chapter, it can be seen that the function of violence as negation of potential is not intrinsic to totalitarianism and colonialism, and therefore only applying to the historical context of Arendt, Camus and Fanon. This function of violence can also be observed in neoliberal biopolitics where it arguably takes an even harsher form, despite discourses of human development and the alleged improvement of living conditions.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to contribute to the conceptualisation of violence without resorting to another narrow definition that offers a fragmented understanding and obscures less evident manifestations of violence. Similarly, the thesis also aimed at avoiding a structural view of violence that would conceal the dynamic effects violence has on subjects. Instead, this thesis has examined how political violence functions. I have argued that violence functions politically as a negation of human potential. I have analysed Hannah Arendt's, Albert Camus's and Frantz Fanon's reflections on violence in order to offer a novel interpretation of their thought and show how they all portray violence as a phenomenon that negates human potential. This negation occurs in the effort to control the unpredictable character of human potential and action; however, when these are constrained, there is an attack on the human condition itself, since potential for creative action is a key aspect of human subjectivity. I have also shown how this function of violence is still relevant in neoliberal biopolitics, by analysing biopolitical rationales as explored my Michel Foucault and by examining Agamben's figure of the Homo Sacer, as a depoliticised subject whose potential has been negated.

Despite the arguably irreconcilable differences between these thinkers, their works have in common that they point at the negating character of violence. Arendt has theorised the effects of totalitarian violence on the political sphere and power; Fanon has showed how colonial violence affects the colonised subject; Camus analyses the effects of existential and absurdist violence on subjects by looking at both the totalitarian and colonial contexts. Foucault has warned us about the shifting strategies of power that wish to regulate daily lives, even if this is to protect and nurture human life, and Agamben has shed light on biopolitical violence in the "zone of indistinction" where human life is depoliticised. The thesis synthesised their works in

a meaningful manner to understand how violence functions politically, its effects on subjects, and expose conceptualisations of violence as negation of potential in their work. There has been an effort to synthesise the chapters in a way that reveals the proximity of these approaches while indicating the different contribution of each to the overall argument.

Arendt's work has often been read as conservative, although some voices in the literature have appreciated the radical element in her thought (Horowitz, 2017). Through chapter one, I have shown that Arendt was deeply concerned with issues of freedom and change, and her idea of the political sphere was indeed a radical one. Arendt emphasized the primacy of action and new beginnings in politics, treating these elements as the building blocks of political power, which violence threatens. Creativity, new beginnings, and change have been discussed as human potential for action, for which Arendt uses the concept of natality, a key aspect of the human condition. The chapter aimed at revealing this link between human natality and the violence of dehumanization in Arendt's work.

I have showed that Arendt's arguably monolithic view that violence is not part of the political sphere stems from her political ontology and her experience of totalitarian violence. Arendt explained totalitarianism as a phenomenon that leads to an inflexible and sterile political space. This is because in the face of unpredictability, and the risks associated with it, totalitarianism freezes human action and destroys the capacity for plurality and shared meaning. Totalitarian violence dehumanises individuals and turns them into masses. For Arendt, who sees the plurality of action and new beginnings as essential characteristics of humanity, dehumanisation occurs exactly because the fact of political (and often biological) natality is attacked. Reading Arendt in this way has allowed me to present her as a thinker who sees violence as a negation of human potential.

The role of this chapter is central to this thesis also because Arendt was a thinker who clearly did not see violence as ontologically necessary to the political sphere. Arendt promoted the idea of agonism instead of violence while showing that politics is not simply an effort to resolve conflict and achieve consensus. Exactly because natality signals the welcoming of difference into the human world and the importance of unhindered change, agonism is the only viable way in which politics can operate without succumbing to violence and be destroyed by it. Individuals reveal their difference and act among equals in a process of power production, in other words within power relations. These relations are competitive and often not free of aggression, but domination and violence can and should be resisted. It has been explained that Arendt does not overlook political violence within politics, but rather claims that it should never be accepted as a necessary evil of politics. Arendt acknowledges the violence of struggles for liberation but sees it as a pre-political element which should eclipse once a community establishes a plural space of political freedom.

Chapter two has revealed how Albert Camus's thought on violence is strikingly aligned with Arendt's and his work enhances the argument by exposing the negation of potential from a different perspective. Both thinkers seem to be driven by their experience of the nihilistic violence of totalitarianism, while they agree that violence in the political sphere should never be treated as legitimate. Chapter two has added to this thesis another layer of analysis that links individual experience and action to the collective. Analysis of Camus's thought furthers Arendtian discussion of solidarity, but also reveals existential violence as experienced at the individual level. In Camus's work this starts with violence against the Self, i.e., suicide, and moves to violence as murder. In other words, both Camus and Arendt are interested in the effects of violence and its negative function, but Arendt focuses more on the political level

while Camus sheds light to the individual existential level. The thesis has read closely *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel*, as Camus's key philosophical works, although his fiction has not been neglected, given that his literary work bears political significance and symbolism (Mrovlje, 2019).

For Camus, the lack of objective, universal meaning, a predetermined purpose of life, is a form of existential violence for a human being. Humans may strive to establish an imagined greater meaning and control absurdity for the same reason Arendt sees ideologies aiming to control the unpredictability of action. This explains why Camus, who understands absurdity as an ineliminable aspect of human life, considers such attacks on unpredictability dangerous and violent. The disappointment of not finding higher meaning and an objective purpose will eventually lead to a nihilistic attitude that sees human life as imperfect and problematic; this together with efforts to invent higher meaning that rules over spontaneous action, will eventually lead to nihilistic violence. The chapter explained why for Camus violence cannot be justified and how he presented rebellion and solidarity as non-violent responses to absurdity. At the individual level, one rebels against absurdity not by reacting to it but by acting anew creatively, experiencing life without the need of higher purpose.

I have explained that Camus's Rebel is an actor capable of both affirmation and negation. For this reason, Camus's rebellion has been interpreted in this thesis as the human potential for action: human potential is the potential of the Rebel. This reveals that violence for Camus manifests as nihilism towards life but also an attack against absurdity as an aspect of human life; therefore, it can be argued that violence also for Camus functions as a negation of human potential for action. Camus shares Arendt's views on pluralistic, violent-free politics, but recognises the paradox of fighting violence and injustice with violent means. Unsurprisingly,

Camus remains consistent by not suggesting a fixed solution to this paradox and advises us to remain open to both affirmative and negative responses, as long as solidarity and the value of human life remain as key guidance of action. The chapter has explored this idea in practice through Camus's work on French Algerian identity. This has been a thorny issue that has historically put Camus against Fanon, but it has been shown that, as far as the conceptualisation of violence is concerned, the two thinkers do not disagree as much as it has been commonly claimed.

Fanon's thought on colonial violence has been brought in exactly at this point of the analysis where Camus's position on Algerian resistance against French colonialism meets Fanon's. Chapter three has discussed Fanon's work not only in order to add a third layer to the thesis' argument but also to consider–arguably–contrasting approaches to those of Arendt and Camus, and eventually offer depth to the analysis by revealing exactly how the negating character of violence operates. Fanon has been read as a thinker with views opposite to those of Arendt and Camus; a thinker who hails violent resistance and thinks of it as the only path to subjectivity and freedom. As explained, Arendt herself suggested that Fanon praises violence, but it is also a widely held impression in the literature that Fanon wrote on violence in order to legitimise it (Kebede, 2001). The chapter has argued that Fanon writes against violence, and this is evident in his discussion of the colonial sphere in which violence negates not simply the potential but the very subjectivity of human beings. Fanon wrote in order to delegitimise colonial violence and expose its function and not to simply offer a radical manifesto.

The thesis has read Fanon's work as an effort to understand the function of colonial violence and its effects on the colonised, in order to break its vicious circle. This can be seen in Fanon's distancing from Hegelian dialectics, and his suggestion that frozen dialectics which deny

recognition must be overcome and the subject needs to establish itself through creative action. Resistance to colonialism necessarily takes place within a context of extreme violence and negation. Fanon hence suggests the externalisation of such violence in order to break from its alienating and self-destructive effects and the key way to achieve this is by forging new subjects, solidarity and allow new beginnings; there is nothing worth preserving from a society contaminated by colonial violence. This is for Fanon the necessary precondition of his wider goal to create a new humanism free from the colonial legacy.

Fanon's engagement with the concept of humanism is perhaps the key characteristic that separates him–as well as Arendt and Camus–from Foucault. Nevertheless, the thesis has tried to establish continuities between these different approaches to show that, although contingent, such conceptualisations remain relevant and analytically useful. The common ground between Fanon and Foucault concerns the link between subjectivity, truth and domination in the colonial context (Lorenzini and Tazzioli, 2018). Foucault's work on the production of truth in biopolitical societies, and discussion of it in secondary literature, mostly concerns Western societies. The chapter has tried to reveal the link between truth and subjectivity in the colonial context. In Fanon, the colonised are denied the opportunity to reveal themselves and act within a community of solidarity, which is essentially the same as denial of subjectivity. In this way, the creation of shared meaning is affected and only discourses of domination emerge; Fanon shows how this affects both the colonised and the coloniser. The zone of non-being, which is how Fanon describes colonialism, is empty and sterile in the same way Arendt describes the sphere of totalitarian politics, and it is domination that mainly characterises both spheres. The production of arbitrary truths in both spheres is similar to truth production in biopolitical spheres, inviting further research to link totalitarianism to biopolitics with attention to the element of the colonial context.

For this reason, chapter four discusses biopolitical violence in Foucault and Agamben confirming its link to totalitarian and colonial violence. The effects of productive power, the goal of biopower to condition biopolitical subjects, obscures the ways in which biopolitics produces violence. It has been shown how totalitarianism and colonialism negate potential, but this creates a paradox of how violence in the biopolitical sphere in which human potential is supposedly recognised and praised. The chapter has argued that they key function of biopolitics is that of regulating human action and the purpose of such regulation is the treatment of uncertainty. Having explained in the previous chapters the importance of not restricting human action and difference despite its unpredictable and destabilising effects, the point that arises is that the regulatory character of biopolitics covertly negates human potential. Biopolitical appeals to human potential involve the responsibilisation of subjects in binary terms of success and failure and restrict the expression of subjectivity within the rationalities of market economics and liberal capitalism in general. In other words, human potential has been hijacked by biopolitics.

The chapter applies this argument to contemporary examples of biopolitical rationales but also links it to the figure of Agamben's *homo sacer* as a liminal biopolitical subject. Agamben's account has been helpful and necessary because he has a more explicit focus on violence than Foucault and this complements the analysis. Agamben's idea of inclusive exclusion explains that biopolitical violence can arguably be seen as the most sinister of all historical manifestations. The idea that a human being can be depoliticised and reduced to bare life revealed another link between biopolitics and colonialism through the concept of shame; the shame Fanon describes as the prevalent feeling of the Black person towards Blackness and one's dehumanised existence is the shame of "failed" and dehumanised biopolitical subjects.

In both cases the dehumanisation has occurred because the core of humanity, human potential, has been negated.

To evaluate the constellation of these chapters, this explains how the thesis added a missing link to the intellectual passage from totalitarianism to biopolitics. This is the passage from Arendt's "gigantic man" of totalitarianism to Foucault's "many-headed biopolitical man" which the thesis complemented with the colonised "non-being". From Arendt's analysis of the links between totalitarianism and imperialism, to the political economy of neoliberal capitalism–built on imperialism–it has been shown how colonialism coincides with totalitarian, imperialistic and biopolitical narratives through racism, depoliticisation and the violent shaping of subjectivities. This continuity has emerged because it has been shown that all these historically contingent phenomena share the same function of violence as negation of human potential. In this way, the thesis invites further research on the links between totalitarianism and biopolitics through the prism of violence.

Furthermore, the thesis has contributed a new perspective to the debate of the ontological importance of violence to the political sphere. Focusing on these particular thinkers has revealed the importance of creative action and difference in the political sphere. This allows an escape from a perpetual cycle of negation because the response to violence does not have to be one of mere reaction and continuation of violence; one can re-act by acting anew in a creative fashion that confirms potential. Without claiming that this can bring an end to all violence, understanding how violence functions and approaching it as negation of potential, helps us locate it and avoid it, at least in future efforts to theorise resistance and alternative politics. As long as we free our thinking from the ontological link between violence and politics, resistance to violent domination and political conflict do not need to be superficially

legitimised but they can be assessed on the extent to which human potential is enabled or negated.

In this sense, choosing to examine how violence functions instead of offering a definition of it has not been presumed but stemmed from a problematisation of essentialism which is not irrelevant to ontological assumptions. It is impossible to essentialise a concept without depoliticizing it because everything political is open to contestation and change and can never be reduced to a unified essence. For this reason, the thesis has followed Oksala's (2012) politicised conception of reality and argued that any effort to define violence as an essence bears the danger of attaching it to the political sphere as an ontological necessary element, an irreducible universal fact. Another important reason to avoid essentialism is that reducing phenomena into ahistorical and apolitical categories conceals the norms and power relations that have shaped them and prevents us from transforming–and even reconciling–what falls into such categories. In other words, by essentialising phenomena and locking them in rigid categories one negates the potential to change them and the world. This invites further research on the functions of violence that can replace depoliticised ideas of irrational and illegitimate violence.

Finally, understanding violence as negation of human potential allows for a subject-centred approach to the problem of violence instead of seeing it as an abstract phenomenon. It is a symptom of our times that many forms of violence are now seen as an abstract threat with invisible victims. Agamben's latest work is concerned with the concept of the crisis and the argument that all politics has been reduced to security (Agamben, 2017). Biopolitics seems to be constantly preoccupied with the emergency of a not clearly identifiable danger. As this thesis suggested, the main danger perceived by biopolitics is the spontaneity and

unpredictability of human potential, which it tries to regulate. Arendt, Camus, and Fanon examined the function of violence in their historical context and suggested that creative, novel action is the only way to avoid domination and violence.

Following from this, a question that begs for further research is what resistance to new forms of violence should look like. In Agamben's work, "destituent potentiality" refers to exercising a power that deactivates governance and the constituted power of the state (Agamben, 2014). Agamben suggests that we need to re-imagine both the subject and action by moving away from existing structures that have been built on the state's foundational violence, and by becoming "ungovernable". This is not far from what Fanon had suggested for postcolonial politics. Agamben explains that the idea of an inoperative subject does not imply inactivity, "but an activity that consists in making human works and productions inoperative, opening them to a new possible use" (ibid, p.69). This once more aligns with how the previous chapters have imagined the opposite pole of violence. Given the effects violence has on potential, as the thesis has shown, any mode of resistance against new forms of violence will necessarily involve re-imagining human potential and subjectivity outside the grasp of violence.

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