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the ethics of anarchism**

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

CAPILLARIES OF FORCE

CONSTITUENT POWER, POROUS SOVEREIGNTY,
AND THE ETHICS OF ANARCHISM

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LONDON, FEBRUARY 2017

“Ich hab’ Mein’ Sach auf Nichts gestellt”

Max Stirner,
Der Einzige und sein Eigentum

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I - ABSTRACT

Despite the omnipresence of *anarchy* in IR, *anarchist* political thought is only partly mobilized by the discipline. IR has been paying a great deal of attention to anarchy, but it failed so far to consistently incorporate anarchism into its conceptual repertoire. Conversely, anarchist theorists have demonstrated only a limited interest in joining debates about international politics. This research-project addresses the incomplete and partial mobilization of anarchist political philosophy in IR, and offers a more holistic approach to the discipline's *grand themes*.

Towards this particular end the thesis deploys a series of key-concepts central to classical anarchist thought, and inserts them into the context of contemporary IR-theory. The research departs from the hypothesis that an engagement of anarchism with IR must run through a mobilization of constituent power. Anarchist political theory is somewhat neglected by the discipline of IR. Yet, apart from the evident lack of anarchism in IR there exists another gap in the literature, namely the inconsistent application of constituent power to the study of global politics. While the thesis focuses chiefly on the anarchist contribution to IR-theory, it also argues that this double-lacuna must be addressed jointly.

The project hence offers a critical narration of IR key-concepts along the lines of philosophical anarchism - a reading which is supported by the deployment of constituent power. Within this context the centrality of power to the study of IR is discussed, and the discipline's underlying methodological assumptions are systematically evaluated. The project furthermore assesses anarchist philosophy against the backdrop of constituent force, and establishes a firm connection between the two traditions of political thought. The conceptual implications of an amalgamation of constituent power and anarchist political theory are eventually explored by means of an engagement with a series of IR's *grand themes*, most notably ontology, sovereignty, agency, spatiality, and global ethics.

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My family supported me unconditionally and without any hesitation, not only during my doctoral studies, but also well before. They have made this endeavor possible, and to them I dedicate this thesis.

III - DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I declare that *Capillaries of Force: Constituent Power, Porous Sovereignty, and the Ethics of Anarchism* is my own work and that all the source that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.

I further promise that in the attached submission I have not presented anyone else's work as my own and I have not colluded with others in the preparation of this work. Where I have taken advantage of the work of others, I have given full acknowledgement.

Christian Pfenninger
London, February 2017

CHAPTER ONE

I | INTRODUCTION: THE VIRTUES OF ANARCHY

1. Anarchy in inter-state politics

1.1 Kenneth Waltz, the reluctant anarchist

One of the key questions addressed by Waltz in the 1979 classic *Theory of International Politics* deals with the challenge of how to regulate the circulation of violence within and across domestic and international political spaces. Departing from the observation that the “state among states conducts its affairs in the brooding shadow of violence” Waltz motivates his readership to acknowledge an inconvenient truth, namely the intimate intertwinement of social life with the latency of violent conflict, before concluding - somewhat consternated - that “the hope that in the absence of an agent to manage or to manipulate conflicting parties the use of force will always be avoided cannot be realistically entertained”.¹ While the latency of violence penetrates the deep-structure of social and political conduct, attempts to manage and regulate the occurrence of force vary across contexts. It is of importance to acknowledge at this point that the common distinction between ‘the domestic’ and ‘the international’ is not a qualitative one between non-violent and violent spaces. Politics is always

¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979), 102.

underpinned by violence, regardless of its location.² The domestic/international binary highlights instead two fundamentally different regulative ideas, each of which employs a distinct mechanism for the coordination of conflict.

Domestically the state monopolizes the deployment of force and puts itself in a position that enables it to appear as the exclusive and legitimate arbiter of violence. Through the government's executive branches coercive structures are maintained, i.e. the police, state bureaucracy, or the military. These structures serve the single most important purpose of curtailing security-competition by means of disabling rivaling claims over legitimacy within a given political space. Violence hence does not disappear but becomes monopolized (through the state), institutionalized (through governmental agencies), and rationalized (through the principle of authority and the monopoly of violence).³

While a veil of authority covers the latency of violence in the domestic setting, force becomes readily visible when directing one's perspective towards 'the international'. Unlike dominant perceptions of the domestic, 'the international' lacks an authority-consensus and must govern itself devoid of overarching coercive structures. The prerogative to use violence does not rest in the hands of a single *Leviathan*, but see-saws through the capillaries of the international. The institution of sovereignty, which attempts to tame the unhampered spread of violence within states, is then also responsible for the ambivalence and unpredictability that harrows international affairs. States expose a certain possessiveness and defend their domestic prerogatives jealously. What translates into a situation of hierarchy within states leads to anarchy among them: domestically as well as internationally Westphalian polities do not recognize the existence of any higher power over and above themselves. The inter-state system is then characterized by the absence of government and the multiplied presence of sovereign polities, each of which possessing authority in its own right. It is the necessity to manage the circulation of violence in the first place - and the specifically statist response to it which divides politics into domestic and

² Ibid., 103.

³ Ibid., 104.

international zones - that leads to the emergence of anarchy in inter-state politics. Hierarchy and anarchy are the two opposing faces of the same coin, and while the regulation of violence seemingly pacifies one political space (the domestic is also a violent, juridical order), it leads to competition and enmity in another (the international).

1.2 The willingness to cooperate, and the fear to do so

The multiplication of competing authority-structures on the international level severely limits the possibility of cooperation among states. On the domestic level the state solves the problem of violence through monopolization, and by means of providing the guarantee to its citizens to care for their security and to protect them from violent assault. Citizens do not need to worry about their security and can instead engage in other, i.e. economic, activities. States even encourage the members of their societies to specialize in a given trade and to integrate as far as possible into a system of mutual interdependency. The lack of guarantees and the absence of an authority-consensus on the international level has the exact opposite effect, and encourages states to attain a level of the greatest possible autonomy and perhaps even autarky.⁴ While the state offers security to its citizens, no agent is capable of providing the same service to the state.

Waltz remarks that a “national system is not one of self-help. The international system is”, and further “The domestic imperative is ‘specialize!’ (...) The international imperative is ‘take care of yourself’”.⁵ The emerging situation is as undesirable as it is tragic: states do recognize that a deeper integration and a division of labour among them would be much more beneficial than a continued insistence on their functional independence. Yet, the structure of the international forces states into a prisoners dilemma and encourages them to remain only loosely connected in a mode of interdependency: collectively beneficial outcomes cannot be achieved due to the absence of a guarantor or

⁴ Ibid., 106.

⁵ Ibid., 104 & 107.

enforcer who would regulate states collective behavior.⁶ States can only control their own behavior and determine the payoff that results from their own actions - the actions of their peers remain beyond their control. States might even prefer to cooperate, integrate, and harvest the fruits of positive-sum games, but the absence of guarantees throws them back into a logic that makes them susceptible to relative gains, while bolstering their own security.⁷ Individual actions that attempt to defy the logic of interdependency and autonomy are incapable of changing it for good, since states that act counter to the logic of self-help risk falling prey to the exploitative behavior of competing units.

1.3 The virtues of anarchy. Or: why anarchy has its perks too

Anarchy regulates interaction among units and puts constraints on their behavior. Yet, while the leaderless makeup of the international sensitizes actors for relative gains, encourages a self-help mentality among them, and limits cooperation to interdependency it is important to acknowledge that anarchy has its perks too. The heading of the section reads – somewhat heretically – “Kenneth Waltz, the reluctant anarchist”. Waltz was no anarchist, at least not in a strictly ideological sense, but he was certainly willing to acknowledge that anarchic modes of organization could offer a series of advantages. One could say that Waltz is a reluctant anarchist, an anarchist out of necessity not conviction, one that refrained from openly endorsing anarchism as a political regime while concurrently advocating anarchist politics. The central theme that runs through *Theory of International Politics* is concerned with the management of the circulation of violence in world politics. Waltz feared that if one attempted to break down the domestic/international-barrier and the well-established practices that regulate force within certain political spaces (i.e. the domestic monopoly of violence and the historically grown practices of international society) international affairs could spiral out of control and discern into a disastrous series of wars.

⁶ Ibid., 105.

⁷ Ibid.

Anarchy is a virtue because it simultaneously constrains and stabilizes political conduct. Furthermore, anarchic regimes do initiate a series of politically desirable outcomes that can lead to a number of beneficiary effects – a claim constantly advanced by anarchists since the 19th century, and phased into IR by Waltz in 1979. What are the virtues of anarchy then?

(I) Anarchic orders can be maintained easier and cheaper than hierarchic ones, mainly due to their decreased proneness to internal power-struggles. Waltz remarks that in cases of power-struggles “substantive issues become entwined with efforts to influence or control the controllers”.⁸ Especially larger, more powerful hierarchies can easily become the subject of hostile takeovers. Anarchic orders are certainly not immune against high-jacking, but their elevated degree of diversification hampers monopolization and centralization far more effectively than a hierarchical order does.

(II) Anarchic orders are pragmatic. The politics of the organization that rid hierarchies pressures them to justify their right to existence on a constant basis. Hierarchies develop a distracting interest in maintaining and protecting themselves, which diverts resources that could have otherwise been used for attending the organization’s original mandate.⁹ The decreased proneness to internal power struggles does of course not imply that anarchies are more cost-efficient than hierarchies. Anarchic orders are indeed labor- and resource-intensive and require ongoing coordination between their constituent parts. Anarchic orders are then not necessarily cheaper than hierarchies, but resources are directed towards more substantive issues, i.e. the coordination between units, instead of allocating them towards fights over institutional control.

(III) Anarchic orders are resilient, and shocks such as war, or the private use of force, can only disperse with great difficulties through the system. Decentralization is self-stabilizing to the extent that it erects a multitude of firewalls between individually fragile units. In the event of a shock the integrity of

⁸ Ibid., 111.

⁹ Ibid.

isolated units might be threatened, but this applies hardly to the overall stability of the anarchic realm as such.¹⁰

(IV) Anarchic orders are flexible and adaptive. Unlike domestic forms of organization international politics cannot rely on hierarchical modes of decision-making, bureaucratic oversight, or effective policing. Out of necessity, and due to the absence of more complex institutional politics, decisions are necessarily made at the bottom level. Accommodation and adjustment are realized through mutual adaptation and not via top-down enforcement. The bottom-up nature of international politics, and the thin layer of actual policies, ensures that the system remains as flexible as possible while retaining a high degree of adaptiveness.¹¹

(V) Anarchic orders foster restraint. States are war-machines and their efforts to mitigate violence are not exclusively directed towards their inside. States monopolize, wield, and direct violence, and even small and supposedly less powerful states are still in the position to marshal disturbingly destructive amounts of lethal military capabilities. The omnipresence of violence, the absence of a durable authority-consensus, and the logic of self-help requires units to cautiously maneuver the political landscape. Manipulations of the system are possible, but they must happen within feasible boundaries. Demands can be made and interest may be articulated, but the ever presence of violence as the ultimate corrective requires restraint and prudence from actors.¹²

2. Anarchy without anarchism

The vices and virtues of anarchy have occupied one of the centre-stages of IR research well before Waltz' 1979 reformulation of classical realist thought. Even IR's predecessors, late 19th and early 20th discourses on geopolitics, have struggled with the question how newly emerging, territorially unified, economically potent, and increasingly militarized states would be able to regulate their intercourse under the absence of an overarching authority structure. The

¹⁰ Ibid., 112.

¹¹ Ibid., 113.

¹² Ibid., 113 f.

origins of the *anarchy problematique* are embedded within these late 19th-century approaches to geopolitics and anthropogeography, and despite the fact that early geopolitical thinkers were not yet in the possession of the elaborate theoretical vocabulary of their 20th/21st-century IR-peers, they anticipated the discourse and its central questions well before the *First Great Debate* and prior to the arrival of the term ‘anarchy’ on IR’s conceptual scene.

A discourse so readily willing to accept anarchy as one of its core tenets must have shown some interest in anarchist political thought and in anarchism at some point! After all, it were 19th-century anarchists who repeatedly highlighted the ‘virtues of anarchy’ that were later praised by Waltz. Yet, far from it! On the contrary, a systematic engagement of IR with anarchist political thought is still largely absent from the debate. There is certainly no lack of normative and analytical models in the IR-field that would make suggestions on the possible structure and the shape of global political regimes. Visions of a world state in the form of a supra-national body have been lined out by realists like Niebuhr and the late Morgenthau in the 50s and 60s, and more recently by Craig in *Glimmers of a new Leviathan*.¹³ Liberals and cosmopolitans¹⁴ are both imagining an ideal-type of global politics which rests on individualism and Kantian universalism, while proponents of the communitarian camp suggest a particularist political project featuring collectivist, community-based social ontologies.¹⁵ On the functional level one will find EU-globalism and neo-medievalism, with suggestions for a federated political regime, and subsidiary dispersions of power.¹⁶ Additional approaches are presented by the English School and constructivism, which adopt

¹³ Note: Morgenthau still rejected this vision in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* and in *Politics Among Nations*, but changed his opinion later on. For an example see Mitrany (1966): *A Working Peace System*; Craig (2003): *Glimmers of a New Leviathan*.

¹⁴ For example: Rawls (1971): *A Theory of Justice*; Koenig-Archibugi (2003): *Taming Globalization: Frontiers of Governance*; Beitz (1979): *Political Theory and International Relations*; Pogge (1989): *Realizing Rawls*; Held (1995): *Democracy and the Global Order*; Held (1996): *Models of Democracy*; Caney (2005): *Justice Beyond Borders - A Global Political Theory*.

¹⁵ For example: Waltzer (1994): *Thick and Thin: Moral Arguments at Home and Abroad*; Waltzer (1995): *Towards a Global Civil Society*.

¹⁶ For example: Pogge (1992): *Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty*; Linklater (1998): *The Transformation of Political Community*; Etzioni (2004): *The Emerging Global Normative Synthesis*.

realism's state-centric ontology while highlighting the possibility of thick patterns of cooperation in a community or a society of states.¹⁷ These theories work within and across the confinements of the *anarchy problematique*. However, one will not encounter a framework that would make an effort to utilize the theoretical and normative insights provided by the philosophical tradition of theoretical anarchism.

This absence of anarchism in IR is part of a larger lacuna in social theory. Apart from some occasional upsurges in the 20th century, there exists no coherently developed body of anarchist philosophy after the Russian Revolution. A few, comparatively recent examples for the resurgence of political anarchism can be found in the writings of Bookchin and May. Bookchin was mainly concerned with the application of anarchist theory to the field of environmentalism, and suggested to organize political communities in confederative, decentralized, and self-sustaining structures, which would allow for the self-actualization of the individual, while preventing the emergence of localism, parochialism, or green luddism.¹⁸ May perpetuates a merger of anarchist philosophy and post-structuralist thought, which argues for an abandonment of essentialist social concepts, and develops a non-foundational political critique of traditional anarchism. This critique reveals how decentralized, non-representative theorizing can be achieved without the reliance on fundamental concepts or motifs.¹⁹

Circling back to IR one must acknowledge that the presence of 'anarchy' in the debate is as evident as the absence of 'anarchism'. The contemporary IR-literature shows in fact a remarkable, and in some ways staggering, silence about the possibilities of global politics based on the premises of anarchist principles. IR-scholars have paid only partial attention to the question whether the discipline

¹⁷ For example: Bull (1977): *The Anarchical Society*; Buzan (2004): *From International to World Society?*; Wendt (1999): *Social Theory of International Politics*.

¹⁸ Murray Bookchin, *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1987); and Murray Bookchin, *Social Ecology and Communalism* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2007).

¹⁹ Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

should look at the dynamics of international politics through an anarchist lens. There exists a distinct anarchist approach to the study of global affairs, a fact highlighted already by Alex Prichard in the 2013 monograph *Justice, Order and Anarchy* on the international political thought of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.²⁰ Yet, while Prichard's contribution to the debate is certainly invaluable in terms of historicising the emergence of anarchist political theory in relation to IR, it engages only partially with discipline-defining concepts. Others have made efforts to address this evident gap, and provided for distinctively anarchist approaches to ontology (Cudworth & Hobden²¹), sovereignty (Newman²²), world politics (Newman²³), global governance (Ashworth²⁴), and the provision of global political goods (Falk²⁵).

2.1 Research question: the anarchist contribution to IR-theory

Despite the obvious omnipresence of *anarchy* in IR, *anarchist* political thought is only partly mobilized by the discipline. IR has been paying a great deal of attention to anarchy, but it failed so far to consistently incorporate anarchism into its conceptual repertoire. Conversely, anarchist theorists have demonstrated only a limited interest in joining debates about international politics. This research-project addresses the incomplete and partial mobilization of anarchist political philosophy in IR, and offers a more holistic and complete anarchist approach to the discipline's *grand themes*. More concretely the thesis engages with dominant IR-key-concepts such as power, ontology, agency, sovereignty, and

²⁰ Alex Prichard, *Justice, Order and Anarchy* (London: Routledge, 2013), 142.

²¹ Erika Cudworth & Stephen Hobden, "Anarchy and Anarchism: Towards a Theory of Complex International Systems", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 39, no. 2 (2010): 399 ff.

²² Saul Newman, "Crowned Anarchy: Postanarchism and International Relations Theory", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 40, no. 2 (2012): 259 ff.

²³ Saul Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: anti-authoritarianism and the dislocation of power* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2001); and Saul Newman: *The politics of postanarchism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

²⁴ Lucien Ashworth, "Anarchism against anarchy. The global anarchical society as a statist world and the prospects for an anarchist international relations", <http://www.anarchist-studies-network.org.uk/documents/Anarchism%20and%20World%20Politics/LA.pdf>, presented at the PSA-conference *Rethinking Anarchy: Anarchism and World Politics*, University of Bristol, 17-18 June 2010: 21 ff.

²⁵ Richard Falk, "Anarchism without 'Anarchism': Searching for Progressive Politics in the Early 21st Century", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 39, no. 2 (2010): 385 ff.

ethics, and aims to scrutinize and destabilize them. The purpose of such an exercise is the cultivation of a critical narrative capable of creating room for accounts of transnational political agency beyond the confinements of Westphalian inter-state politics. Towards this particular end the thesis deploys a series of key-concepts central to classical anarchist thought, and inserts them into the context of contemporary IR-theory. The research departs from the hypothesis that an engagement of anarchism with IR must run through a mobilization of constituent power. Anarchist political theory is somewhat neglected by the discipline of IR. Yet, apart from the evident lack of anarchism in IR there exists another gap in the literature, namely the inconsistent application of constituent power to the study of global politics. While the thesis focuses chiefly on the anarchist contribution to IR-theory, it also argues that this double-lacuna must be addressed jointly. Departing from this hypothesis the project is guided by three major research questions:

First, and in reference to constituent power: (i) can it be confirmed that constituent power is inconsistently applied in IR-theory?; (ii) is it possible to trace a potential lacuna through the field's history?; (iii) if constituent power is in fact vastly absent from IR: what are the conceptual implications, and why would it be necessary to mobilize constituent power in IR?

Second, to what extent is the anarchist tradition of political thought capable of addressing a lack of constituent power in IR-theory? Would the tradition be in a position to successfully institutionalize constituent power in IR? More specifically: (i) which author(s) are best suited for this particular task?; (ii) how would such a mobilization of constituent power look in concrete terms?; (iii) how would a joint deployment of anarchism and constituent power resonate with IR's power-discourse?

Third, to what extent might the co-mobilization of anarchist political theory and constituent power support the destabilization and reframing of IR's *grand themes*? How would an anarchist approach to (i) power in international affairs; (ii) the ontology of the global; (iii) sovereignty; (iv) agency in international

politics; (v) the spatial ordering of the global; (vi) and the ethics of world politics look like?

2.2 Methodological approach and plan of work

A more detailed account of the study's underlying methodological assumptions is provided at the beginning of chapter II. The thesis aims, as already mentioned above, to tackle the absence of anarchism in IR-theory through the engagement and subsequent deployment of constituent power. Diverging framings of power, it is argued, impact on how IR conducts its enquiries. The mobilization of qualitatively different types of power consequently touches upon the methodological dimension of knowledge-production, and impacts on how IR approaches the study global political phenomena in the first place. The study departs from the assumption that discourses on IR-theory have neglected constituent power so far, and privileged instead varying kinds of constituted power (i.e. direct or institutional force). This overly narrow framing impacts on how the discipline theorizes the emergence, maintenance, and transformation of global political space in general, and the exercise of agency in international affairs more specifically.

The research-project offers a critical narration of IR key-concepts along the lines of philosophical anarchism - a reading which is supported by the deployment of constituent power in various ways: *chapter II* discusses the centrality of power to the study of IR, and engages in a systematic evaluation of the discipline's underlying methodological assumptions. *Chapter III* and *IV* assess anarchist philosophy against the background of constituent force, and establish a firm connection between the two traditions of political thought. *Chapter V* circles back to IR's internal discourse on power, and discusses the potential contribution of anarchist philosophy to this particular part of the discipline. *Chapters VI, VII,* and *VIII* eventually explore the conceptual implications of an amalgamation of constituent power and anarchist political theory through an engagement with a series of IR key-concepts, most notably ontology, sovereignty, agency, and global ethics.

CHAPTER TWO

II | THE POWER-TRAP

1. Introduction: power discourses

The primary aim of this chapter is to assess whether certain types of power are indeed inconsistently applied in IR-theory. This part of the thesis discusses the centrality of power to the study of IR/geopolitics, and engages in a systematic evaluation of the discipline's underlying methodological assumptions (section *one*). Section *two* investigates into the resonance of different conceptualizations of power through a close reading of the works of four prominent political theorists, namely Friedrich Ratzel, Rudolf Kjellen, Thomas Barnett, and Zbigniew Brzezinski. An engagement with these early and contemporary works of IR-theory has the aim of tracing the presence of a potential lacuna through the field's history. The *third* and final part of the chapter evaluates the findings and addresses the conceptual implications that might derive from a potential lack of certain types of power in IR-theory.

Framing International Relations as a 'power discourse' might be unwarranted as it brings with it the danger of an undifferentiated and sweeping generalization, which fails to grasp the complexity and capillarity of an academic discourse that deals, in very broad terms, with political phenomena of a non-

domestic nature. Ever since its genesis in the late 19th and early 20th century the discipline that dedicated much of its intellectual effort to the study of territorially organized, constitutionally independent authority-structures²⁶ - also referred to as states - has tried to grasp the political relevance of institutions such as sovereignty, diplomacy, great power politics, the effects of market forces, nationalism, emerging notions of human rights and states responsibilities, and lately environmental stewardship.²⁷ 'Power', however, has always held a special place in the minds of IR-researchers: diplomacy, the market, the nation-state, etc. are representations of global constitutional authority-structures which, at the very same time, denote and regulate the legitimate wielders of power.²⁸

'Power' has been bracketed deliberately in inverted commas to shed light on the ambiguous and sometimes elusive nature of a concept that comes in various shades and hues: as a resource or capability²⁹, a relational phenomenon³⁰, an institutional mechanism³¹, to name just a few. The seminal *Politics Among Nations* carries *The Struggle for Power and Peace* in its title, and Morgenthau ensures with great care and particularity that his reader understands the momentousness of the power-concept for the study of international affairs. Politics as an autonomous realm concerns itself with interests, "interests defined in terms of power".³² Conceptual differences about the impact of *units* and *structures* aside, Waltz concurs that "neorealism sees power as a possible useful means, with states running risks if they have either too little or too much of it. (...) sensible statesmen try to have an appropriate amount of it".³³ A conscious prevalence of

²⁶ George Sørensen, "Sovereignty: Change and Continuity in a Fundamental Institution", in *Sovereignty at the Millennium*, ed. Robert Jackson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 170 f.

²⁷ Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society* (Cambridge: University Press, 2004), 187.

²⁸ Daniel Philpott, "Westphalia, Authority, and International Society", in *Sovereignty at the Millennium*, ed. Robert Jackson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 147 ff.

²⁹ Brian C. Schmidt, "Competing Realist Conceptions of Power", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005): 528.

³⁰ Robert A. Dahl, "The Concept of Power", *Behavioral Science* 2, no. 3 (1957): 202 f.

³¹ Ronnie D. Lipschutz, "Power, Politics and Global Civil Society", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005): 750 f.

³² Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 5.

³³ Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 616.

power is also eminent in liberal studies of international politics. Keohane, for instance, argues for the prudent yet directed use of power for the purpose of furthering “liberal values”.³⁴ Power might not be constitutive of IR, that means the concept does not define its essence as an academic discipline. Yet, IR is, at least to a certain extent, a ‘power discourse’, mainly due to its preoccupation with transnational-authority structures and its fixation on the question how global political outcomes are shaped and produced by certain resourceful actors.

1.1 Power and epistemology

There is, however, another reason why the term ‘power discourse’ serves as a suitable description of IR. As it will be argued in more detail further below power is more than a mere object open for the researcher’s curiosity and enquiry. The concept of power impacts on the study of international politics in ways that move beyond the question of ontology, namely *what is the unit or referent object of IR’s analysis?* Notions of power also define how the discourse conducts its enquiries. It consequently touches upon the epistemic dimension of knowledge production: *how does IR generate knowledge about global political processes in the first place?* Or, more specifically, *how does IR generate knowledge about the emergence and maintenance of international political space?*

The following analysis departs from the assumption that especially classical and neoclassical discourses of IR and geopolitics are underpinned by a very *specific* and particularly *problematic* understanding of power and authority in international affairs: these notions of power are specific to the extent that power and authority are widely read as a coercive phenomenon; and they appear as increasingly problematic since these narrow conceptions of power severely impact on how the discourse theorizes the emergence and maintenance of global political spaces (i.e. the international). Explicit and implicit notions of power alike serve as epistemic devices, and impact on how geopolitics and IR conceive of the existence of political realms other than the state-form. The discourse has fallen

³⁴ Robert O. Keohane, “Twenty Years of Institutional Liberalism“, *International Relations* 26, no. 2 (2012): 127.

into a metaphorical ‘power-trap’ and is led astray towards an ontology of the international in which political space is constituted and populated by an assemblage of discrete, hermetic entities with the capacity to wield, first and foremost, subtractive or punitive power.

1.2 IR’s underlying epistemic assumptions (I): the territorial trap

Before any further elaboration on the notion of a power-trap can take place it is indispensable to carve out the critical context into which the concept inserts itself. The term power-trap borrows from Agnew’s preceding concept, outlined in *The Territorial Trap*, in which he scrutinized geopolitics’ and IR’s narrow territorial focus. Agnew identified three distinct problems that emerge from an epistemology which narrates space predominantly through a territorial lens: *first*, a conceptually entrenched vision of governance that leads into a heroic discourse in which the modern nation state is seen as without alternative for effectively governing a demos.³⁵ *Second*, a static and a-historic framing of the international with a supposedly fixed geographical and territorial ontology that severs the ties between domestic and international zones.³⁶ And *third*, a normalizing and naturalizing process, attached to the practices of territoriality and juridical sovereignty, in which states emerge as natural habitats of nations and containers of society.³⁷ “The territorial state became not just a political hegemon, but a conceptual one as well”³⁸, as Murphy put it.

The addressee of Agnew’s criticism are early and mid-20th-century discourses of geopolitics and IR, which revolve conceptually around a classical triad that comprises of the mutually reinforcing elements of *territory*, *authority*, and *space*. What this theoretical cluster signifies is that international political spaces in general, and geopolitical spaces in particular, are epistemically conceptualized

³⁵ John Agnew, “The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory”, *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1994): 60 ff.

³⁶ Ibid., 66 - and similarly: Simon Reid-Henry, “The Territorial Trap Fifteen Years On”, *Geopolitics* 15 (2010): 753 f.

³⁷ Agnew, “The Territorial Trap”, 68 ff. and Stuart Elden, “Thinking Territory Historically”, *Geopolitics* 15 (2010): 757.

³⁸ Alexander Murphy, “Identity and Territory”, *Geopolitics* 15 (2010): 771.

through a geographical lens. Classical discourses on geopolitics essentially refer to this political construction of territorial entities, i.e. the modern nation-state. Consequently notions of authority in relation to political spaces are predominantly understood as an agent's ability to control territory by means of contributing to an ontology that hinges at the geographical division of the political plane.

What Agnew and others propose is not to abandon geopolitics' territorial focus and its geographical narrative altogether. Territory is still deemed important for understanding the underlying dynamics behind global political processes.³⁹ Yet, when applied as a monocausal explanatory factor it is also insufficiently equipped for grasping the political gravity of newly emerging spatial forms.⁴⁰ Geopolitical anomalies such as the rise of quasi-states - polities without legal jurisdiction over territory - challenge not only the juridical notion of sovereignty, but severs its intimate boundedness to a specific territory at the very same time.⁴¹ Recent developments suggest that the discipline needs to come to terms with an alternative framing of space, which scrutinizes practices of bordering, and grasps the function of borders as a "flexible construct of (...) political power"⁴², manifest in cultural, economic, or ideational phenomena alike. Re-conceptualizing classical discourses alongside this line is not denying the validity of *territorial* epistemologies. It rather gives rise to a heteronomous account of space by means of analytically grasping the co-existence and co-constitution of political entities that expose patterns of non-territorial rule, a lack of territorial fixity, and are not necessarily mutually exclusive.⁴³

³⁹ Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography* (New York: Random House, 2012).

⁴⁰ Agnew, "The Territorial Trap", 72.

⁴¹ Fiona McConnell, "The Fallacy and the Promise of the Territorial Trap", *Geopolitics* 15 (2010): 762 f.

⁴² David Newman, "Territory, Compartment and Borders: Avoiding the Trap of the Territorial Trap", *Geopolitics* 15 (2010): 773 f.

⁴³ John Ruggie, "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations", *International Organization* 47, no. 1 (1993): 148 ff.; and similar John Agnew, "Still trapped in Territory", *Geopolitics* 15 (2010): 782 f.

1.3 IR's underlying epistemic assumptions (II): the power-trap

The uniquely innovative element of Agnew's critical approach is its ability to contribute to a reformulation of the *space-authority-territory* triad by means of going beyond territorial epistemologies. In pursuance of deepening and broadening the already advanced criticism this thesis suggest that targeting the remaining authority/power component will further augment geopolitics'/IR's ontological horizon, and lead towards an anarchist-informed conception of geopolitics in which space is constituted by notions of constitutive and productive forms of power. Coupled to classical discourses of geopolitics and IR is a distinct apprehension of what authority signifies in international affairs, and how it affects both, the dynamics within the global political arena as well as the spatial representation of international political realms. Political authority is routinely equated with the ability to wield power, while power is narrated as the state's potential to exercise causal, coercive dominance over other actors by means of pushing them towards decisions they would have not taken otherwise. In short: political authority in a classical framing is closely associated with the capacity to mobilize and exert coercive power and potentially violent forms of authority.

This affiliation of the classical discourse with an admittedly narrow and perhaps even deliberately unequivocal reading of authority has two distinct effects: *First*, power is mainly understood as a resource that can be possessed, wielded, directed, and mobilized by states for the purpose of goal-attainment in a foreign policy context. *Second*, and more importantly for the argument to be developed in this chapter, a narrow fixation on one type of authority/power also affects the way in which geopolitics and IR as an academic discipline theorizes upon the constitution of geopolitical spaces, namely by means of mobilizing classical notions of coercive power. Hence, classical geopolitical space exists (supposedly) only by virtue of an underlying coercive process. The subsequent analysis sheds light on the fact that classical geopolitical thinkers such as Ratzel, Kjellen, or Haushofer were by no means ignorant of forms of power other than coercion. They had, however, good reasons to limit their theoretical endeavors to

geopolitical spaces that are qua definition formed and maintained through a coercive process: namely states. Haushofer, for instance, addressed his writings specifically to politicians, diplomats, and political practitioners and had no elevated interest in dignifying or ascribing agency and legitimacy to demoi other than the state-form.⁴⁴

Murphy's statement according to which "the territorial state became not just a political hegemon, but a conceptual one as well"⁴⁵ then acquires a second meaning. The conceptual hegemony of statism affects the making and thinking of geopolitical space beyond the notion of territorial exclusivity, and reaches out into the realm of power: *hegemonic territoriality* accompanied by *hegemonic authority* - territorial trap and power-trap side by side. Barnett and Duvall note that the "failure to develop alternative conceptions of power limits the ability of international relations scholars to understand how global outcomes are produced".⁴⁶ This chapter proposes that the very ability to conceive different, intertwining forms of power also directly influences the discipline's ability to theorize the emergence of order beyond the state-form (i.e. the constitution of geopolitical space via the exercise of non-coercive forms of power). When questions about the nature of order in international politics is posed, notions of power must be conceived as an essential epistemic tool to grasp different types of structuring processes. The diverging qualities of power hence function as a lens and enable the scholar to grasp the multiple elements of the transnational's ontological constitution.

1.4 A taxonomy of power

The subsequent analysis mobilizes Barnett's and Duvall's taxonomy of power, which provides a synthetic approach to the study of relational power, and conceptually amalgams aspects of direct control, institutional force, and social

⁴⁴ Karl Haushofer, "Why Geopolitik?", in *The Geopolitics Reader*, ed. Gearóid Ó. Tuathail & Simon Dalby (London: Routledge, 2003), 33 ff.

⁴⁵ Murphy, "Identity and Territory", 771.

⁴⁶ Michael Barnett & Raymond Duvall, "Power in International Politics", *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (2005): 41.

constitution. The taxonomy has been chosen for two particular reasons: *first*, due to its ability of demonstrating the parallel activity of different forms of power in international politics, without giving primacy to one type of power over another.⁴⁷ And *second*, because the taxonomy-model offers a blend of actor-centered and constitutive approaches, which allows for a multidimensional conception of the phenomenon, while avoiding a ‘good’ vs. ‘bad’ power dichotomy.⁴⁸ Departing from the assumption that power is first and foremost a relational phenomenon that operates “in and through social relations”⁴⁹ and shapes the “capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate”⁵⁰ Barnett and Duvall suggest to conceptualize power alongside two axis: relational *specificity*, and the kind of *social relation* through which actors capacities are affected.⁵¹ The resulting matrix leads to a taxonomy of power which comprises of *compulsory*, *institutional*, *structural*, and *productive* elements.⁵²

Compulsory power comes closest to the capability-model which is widely exposed by realist IR theories: states are constructed as rational actors, black boxes even, that possess intentionality and operate within a self-help system under the premises of maximizing their chances of survival. Conflicts of interest are resolved by material, symbolic, or normative means, which are perceived of as resources and can be mobilized for the purpose of goal attainment.⁵³ Compulsory power is structured around *A*’s ability to constrain and limit *B*’s actions, while actor *A* has power over actor *B* only “because it has material and ideational resources at its disposal” which allow for effective goal attainment - devoid of these resources *A*’s power is lacking.

Institutional power overlaps with compulsion in so far as both stress limiting and constraining socio-political phenomena, i.e. agenda setting or the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 44.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 39.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 45 ff.

⁵² Ibid., 43.

⁵³ Ibid., 49.

governing biases of institutions.⁵⁴ Contrary to compulsion institutional power permits action at a distance, and acknowledges actors ability to exercise control by indirect means, i.e. through formal and informal institutions.⁵⁵ Institutions are seen as “instrument(s) of compulsory power”⁵⁶ and privilege certain actors by means of providing them with act-capacity. An empowered actor does not need to dominate the institution in question - holding an elevated position, or being equipped with certain rights, is already a phenomenon deriving from institutional power.⁵⁷

Structural power, pays attention to the “co-constitutive internal relations”⁵⁸ that determine actors subject-positions within a socio-political system and presupposes a certain degree of direct relationality. Internal relations hence need to be understood as mutually constitutive, which means an actor *A* “exists only by virtue of its relation to structural position *B*”.⁵⁹ *A* and *B* are not always already socialized political subjects, as they would have been in a setting where coercive power reigns, but owe their very existence to a reciprocal, generative, and co-constitutive process - *A* could not come into existence without *B*, and *vice versa*. A master-slave relationship, were subject positions are dependent on mutual co-constitution, or the capital-labor nexus in the capitalist economic system are prime examples for structural forms of power.⁶⁰

Productive power, departs form the structural model by leaving the necessity of direct structural relations behind, favoring instead diffuse process of social generation.⁶¹ Productive power is post-structural to the extent that it allows to conceive power in terms not necessarily defined by hierarchical relations.⁶² This does not imply that productive power is *per se* free from binaries - a heroic

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 51.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 52 f.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 53.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 55.

⁶² Ibid., 56.

discourse, for instance, is heavily charged with binaries.⁶³ However, due to the fact that productive power puts a special emphasis on the diffuse character of constitutive power it allows for a greater variety of overlapping and intersecting systems of knowledge, discourses, or practices which can but don't have to be co-constitutive, i.e. discourses on gender, failed states, universal ethical norms and standards, and so forth.⁶⁴

2. Power and the making of political space

The overarching question that guides the following section is: which type of power is predominantly mobilized by classical and neoclassical discourses of IR and geopolitics, and how does it impact on the conception of global political space? The analysis focuses on four specific writers: Friedrich Ratzel, Rudolf Kjellen, Thomas Barnett, and Zbigniew Brzezinski. This particular set of geopolitical theoreticians has been chosen because they represent different stages in the development and evolution of geopolitical thought. While Ratzel and Kjellen count as early geopolitical thinkers (late 19th to early 20th century) with decisive influence on subsequent generations of theorists, Barnett and Brzezinski stand last in a line of the still evolving discipline, and represent contemporary forms of geopolitical reasoning. Furthermore, the selected authors represent distinct and quite heterogenous approaches to the field of geopolitics: for Ratzel the state counts as a mere tool which safeguards the integrity of the soil, while Kjellen stresses the ethico-politico underpinning of (geo)political conduct. Barnett falls in the category of liberal institutionalism, whereas Brzezinski represents a strand of state-based multilateralism. It is the prime objective of this section to flesh out the theories underlying notions of political authority, in order to gain a more comprehensive insight into how power as an epistemic lens impacts on the framing of space, order, and sovereignty in geopolitics and IR.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 55.

2.1 Friedrich Ratzel: Anthropogeographie

In Ratzel's view states are first and foremost purely instrumental constructs - associations of need - which come into existence through a social contract that hinges at the aggregation of subjective and individual wills, hence they are aggregated organisms (*Aggregatorganismus*).⁶⁵ The soil, a second political key element in Ratzel's thought, secures the survival of the nation, and the state acts as its protector.⁶⁶ Initially the state's activity is limited to safeguarding the integrity of the land, but the farther states progress the more competences they take on in supporting the development of capabilities, i.e. through fostering trade relations, which feeds back and increases the state's strength as well - its ultimate purpose, however, remains the provision of protection.⁶⁷

What determines the nature of the state - and the types of power mobilized - becomes visible if one looks into the relation between the state and the nation. As mentioned the state serves as the soil's protector, and the soil is the guarantor for a nation's survival. The state-soil-nation relation is, however, not transitory, and the state is not necessarily the protector of the nation - in fact, the state-nation relationship is at times heavily charged with tensions and the state's ability to manage territory effectively interferes with the nation's permanent moves of occasional contraction and, more importantly, its desire to expand. *Verdichtung*, literary translated into compression, or, more suitable in this context, overcrowding is the key to the notion of power and order that defines the state-form.⁶⁸ Ratzel's state is clearly a self-sufficient security maximizer and has the inherent tendency to value the status quo and the prevailing balance of power within the international system.⁶⁹ The state does not know organic expansion - if

⁶⁵ Friedrich Ratzel, *Anthropogeographie. Grundzüge der Anwendung der Erdkunde auf die Geschichte* (Stuttgart: J. Engelhorn, 1909), 2 – note: by means of joining a state citizens do not surrender their individuality, they 'do not scarif a single fibre or cell' as Ratzel puts it, but translate instead parts of their particular wills into state-power. The concept of the state as an *Aggregatorganismus* (aggregated organism) runs also counter to popular interpretation of Ratzel alleged anthropomorphism (in which case the state assumes qualities of a literal person or living organism).

⁶⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 45.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 155.

it expands, it does so politically. As an aggregated organism (*Aggregatorganismus*) its growth presupposes a, and is causally dependent on, the prior existence of a political will to expand.⁷⁰ The nation on the other side is ignorant of political borders. Other than the state it grows similar to an organism and won't be limited by the narrow territorial confinements of the state-form.⁷¹ It is in fact this permanent tendency of the nation to expand that keeps it alive as a socio-cultural body: nations that can not grow, or clash with other nations, lose out against competing entities that have enough space at their disposal to strive and expand unhampered.⁷²

It is now up to the state to react to this pressure and to regulate internal friction.⁷³ In cases where the perspective of expansion is not given the state will turn against the nation by means of curbing its organic drive to grow: practices such as abandoning sickly newborns or permitting blood vengeance for libel are, in Ratzel's understanding, archaic mechanisms for population control.⁷⁴ Regulating population growth is a viable option for decreasing internal friction in the short term - in the long run the state will attempt to keep pace with the nation's growth and synchronize it with its own political and territorial expansion.⁷⁵ This forceful political expansion of the state - the *Kampf um Raum* and the strive for *Großraum*⁷⁶ - is eventually a means that supports and fosters the nation's desire for growth.⁷⁷

While Ratzel's geopolitical narrative exposes traits of productive, structural, and institutional power it rests on a predominantly compulsory foundation into which the other three types collapse: states do indeed mobilize certain forms of productive power, i.e. when permitting the above mentioned practices of infanticide and blood vengeance. They turn by that means towards

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 158.

⁷³ Ibid., 159 - translation: *Verminderung der inneren Reibung*.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 48.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 159 ff.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 155.

their inside and exercise control over life through positively sanctioning certain practices which contribute to the production of governable subjectivities. However, the mobilization of the nations' productive potential is only instrumental and has the purpose of protecting the soil and strengthen available capabilities. Fostering trade relations through institutional arrangements functions in the same vain: states engage in economic exchange with each other, but they do so only for the purpose of developing their capabilities - the prime objective of the state remains the protection of the nation's territory.⁷⁸ In structural terms states mutually constitutive positions are dictated by the exogenous logic of the international system: the nation's growth and the resulting compression forces all states - as guardians of the soil - into an exhausting and attritional battle of political and territorial expansion, which they cannot chose to fight but are forced to take on, since they are in the first place constructed as war-fighting machineries with the ability to mobilize extensive forms of compulsory power.

2.2 Rudolf Kjellen: Der Staat als Lebensform

Kjellen suggested that a comprehensive science of the state must put itself in a theoretical position which allows it to conceive the state as a synthetic and integrated socio-political phenomenon. The juridical and administrative side (authority and sovereignty) is accompanied and supplemented by sociopolitical, politico-economic, ethnopolitical, and geopolitical elements.⁷⁹ While the first three elements constitute a realm of creativity and genesis (*Kulturseite*), ethno- and geopolitics fall into the realm of necessity (*Naturseite*) which is dominated by a struggle for growth and existence and cannot be entirely governed or controlled by law or economic rationality.⁸⁰ Kjellen finally arrives at an anthropomorphic conception of the state and argues that the instrumental rationality of the liberal-juridical model fails to capture the state's organic feature: its ability to cultivate a personality, the will to expand, the struggle for live, and the capacity for

⁷⁸ Ibid., 44.

⁷⁹ Rudolf Kjellen, *Der Staat als Lebensform* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1917), 43 ff.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 28.

developing purely self-referential interests.⁸¹ The state is quite literally a living organism⁸² - human-like in fact - and is as such driven by rationality (expressed through law, culture, economic exchange, c.f. *Kulturseite*) and appetite (the desire to expand culturally and geographically, c.f. *Naturseite*).⁸³

Ratzel and Kjellen disagree over the characteristics that describe the state-form best: *state-as-a-person* (anthropomorphic) vs. *state-as-an-institution* (aggregated organism). This disagreement leads to a number of competing interpretations about the functioning and the purpose of the state and its relation to the soil and the nation. However, despite a series of disagreements, Ratzel's and Kjellen's states have in common that they act predominantly under the premise of compulsory and direct power. For Ratzel this has already been demonstrated in the previous section. Regarding Kjellen's theory of geopolitics one needs to look closely at the external realm of necessity (*Naturseite*) where state-organisms perform the struggle for life, this most basic, highly essential, fiercely fought *Kampf um Dasein*.⁸⁴ The state as a synthetic phenomenon also comprises of a generative *Kulturseite* which entails creative politico-judicial, politico-economic, and socio-economic elements. This suggests that there should be plenty of room for structural and productive accounts of power within the political process. Kjellen notes, however, that the state's structural and productive side is predominantly inward facing and, much more importantly, completely enwrought by the logic of compulsory power represented in the *Naturseite*-elements of ethno- and geopolitics: "the state as the wielder of power and force precedes the state as a politico-judicial phenomenon - not vice versa".⁸⁵ If lost in its extreme the nature-culture hierarchy can even go so far that the state's generative powers cease to exist entirely when the struggle for life intensifies and the desire for

⁸¹ Ibid., 228.

⁸² Ibid., 33 f.

⁸³ Ibid., 29 & 35 ff.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 28.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 32 - translation: *Der Staat als Macht ist der weitere Begriff der den Staat als Recht umfasst - nicht umgekehrt.*

growth and expansion wreaks havoc on the previously established order⁸⁶: “states cherish the law, but they value their survival even more”.⁸⁷

The emergence of the nature-culture hierarchy begs the question where the structural fixity that forces states into a life-or-death struggle, which can only be fought by means of mobilizing *compulsive* power, eventually comes from? The answer lies in Kjellen’s anthropomorphic metaphor which strongly suggests that states are possessive individualists, pre- or auto-constituted by their own virtue, jealously protecting their uniqueness and individuality in an agent-to-agent battle for survival. The geopolitical element of this “natural urge for delimitation”⁸⁸ can be found in the principle of geographical and ethnical individualization: if the state is a person, then the territory is its body and the nation its character.⁸⁹ States attempt to emancipate themselves from other geopolitical entities and must strive for autarky and self sufficiency, which allows them to preserve their uniqueness and independence.⁹⁰ While autarky is the bedrock for self-determination, expansion and conquest are the guarantors for continued existence. States are not necessarily characterized by a raw appetite for territorial expansion, but the “categorical imperative of self-preservation”⁹¹, which is tied to the necessity of acquiring new living-space in order to prevent debilitating stasis, forces states onto the battlefields⁹² and nurtures their egoistic will to power.⁹³ Great power politics hence is a quasi-biological phenomenon and the geopolitical version of a struggle for life which derives from states natural drive towards geographical and ethnical individualization. The biological determinism leads to persistent rivalry, naturally given relatedness, and the death of states which are subject to perishableness like all other organisms.⁹⁴ The struggle for life and death

⁸⁶ Ibid., 28.

⁸⁷ Ibid. - translation: *Das Recht mag ihnen teuer sein, aber lieber ist ihnen doch das Leben.*

⁸⁸ Ibid., 66 (geographical) & 138 (ethnical) - translation: *Natürliche Begrenzung.*

⁸⁹ Ibid., 57 (body) & 138 (character).

⁹⁰ Ibid., 76.

⁹¹ Ibid., 81 - translation: *Lebenskräftige Staaten auf begrenztem Raum gehorchen dem kategorischen politischen Imperativ, ihren Raum durch Kolonisation, Zusammenschluß oder Eroberung verschiedener Art zu erweitern.*

⁹² Ibid., 83.

⁹³ Ibid., 117.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 38 ff.

is necessarily fought by means of mobilizing direct and coercive forms of power which are the only guarantors for surviving in the external realm of necessity (*Naturseite*) and which enwroughts the domestic realm of genesis (*Kulturseite*) where institutional, structural, and productive power can be found.

2.3 Thomas Barnett: The Pentagon's New Map

Barnett's *The Pentagon's New Map* is situated in the area of conflict- and security studies and attempts to work out a new operating theory for the post-Cold War (and post-9/11) environment that helps to identify threats, delineate conditions for stability, and establishes a new rule-set for the legitimate use of violence in international affairs.⁹⁵ Barnett notes that the attacks of September 11 had a catalyzing effect on the search for a new grand strategy that could replace the outdated Cold War-policy of containment. September 11 served as a *system perturbation* and demonstrated how "globalization was remaking the global security environment".⁹⁶ And it hinted towards the necessity of devising new rule sets for international security politics.⁹⁷ This newly emerging perspective urges policy makers to "view the global security environment as divided between those states that adhere to globalization's security rule-set (the Core) and those that do not (the Gap)".⁹⁸ The Core is defined as the 'connected' states that synchronize their domestic affairs with the flows of globalization and foster a domestic order that goes on par with norms such as democracy, rule of law, and free market capitalism.⁹⁹ The Gap is 'disconnected' from globalization and not willing or able to accept its newly emerging rule-set. While the Core is governed by a condition that comes "awfully close to Kant's perpetual peace" the Gap resembles the Hobbesian state of nature in which life is nasty, brutish, and short.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Thomas P.M. Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map. War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Berkley Books, 2005), 10.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 6 f.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 261.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 26 f.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 125 ff.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 169 f.

Barnett's ostensibly liberal-institutionalist paradigm is heavily dependent on, and backed by, compulsory and direct power and a centralized vision of order. Barnett favors, as mentioned, a rule-based approach to global security: rules provide for predictability and security, and the process of globalization, in concert with the prospects of socio-political integration, is one possible paradigm that could lead to the delineation of a new security-consensus. The problem that emerges in this context is that rule-sets do not necessarily spread on their own, and, more importantly, are often refuted by actors who prefer diverging norms. In the present case in which adherence to the rules of globalization equals connectedness (the Core) refusal to commit to certain politico-economic norms (disconnectedness, the Gap) breeds danger.¹⁰¹

Barnett repeatedly reiterates his call to engage in the "historical process of shrinking the Gap"¹⁰² and of "making globalization truly global"¹⁰³, mainly by means of tackling rogue states, bad leaders and warlords.¹⁰⁴ The market needs an enforcer for properly spreading its rules in the Gap (military-market link), and the U.S. and its military are the only agent capable of acting as the much needed Gap-Leviathan.¹⁰⁵ This Leviathan-force operates under the premises of preemption and has a strong focus on military capabilities which allows it to function as a global police force: its major emphasis lies on rapid deployment into the Gap, it preempts where and when possible, stays offensive, and acts unilaterally.¹⁰⁶ Barnett adds that military intervention and the frequent policing of globalization's frontiers is not enough, and calls for the supplementation of the Leviathan by a System-Admin-force: after breaking the resistance of Gap-actors who wish to disconnect themselves from the market the System Admin steps in and streamlines the post-conflict environment alongside the lines of liberal

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 45.

¹⁰² Ibid., 170.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 54.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 304.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 192.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 176.

globalization.¹⁰⁷ While the Leviathan is a “force for might”, the System Admin represents a “force for right”.¹⁰⁸

In terms of the underlying notions of power the strategy of “waging war within the context of everything else”¹⁰⁹ exposes clear patterns of institutional, structural, and productive power which is mainly wielded by the System Admin force. Barnett clearly understands that security defined as adherence to the rule-set of globalization can only exist within the setting of the market place (which represents institutional power). In order to establish this novel security landscape, subject-positions and subjectivities need to be manipulated: the implementation of mutually constitutive structural relations between capital and labour is required (utilizing structural power), in concert with a deep commitment towards individualism, economic rationality, and the maximization of personal gains (through discourses which represent productive power).

The institutional/structural/productive power exposed by the System Admin force is however only secondary to the war-fighting Leviathan-force. Barnett’s framework must collapse into compulsory power and a highly centralized vision of order. The military-market link subordinates other forms of power to the Leviathan’s ability to ‘wage war in the context of everything else’. This happens by means of mobilizing its clearly superior military capabilities for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, and policing a global security environment which revolves around the politico-economic reality of globalized liberalism. Power in this case is first and foremost compulsory, and only in second instance institutional/structural/productive - the attached vision of order is again first and foremost centralized, and only then characterized by institutional, structural, and biopolitical patterns.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 320 ff.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 315.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 274.

2.4 Zbigniew Brzezinski: Strategic Vision

Brzezinski's *Strategic Vision* presents the reader with a sober and levelheaded approach to US foreign policy and is underpinned by a cautious and hesitant optimism. For Brzezinski the international is no frontier that awaits domestication, but rather a finite and carefully calibrated system whose manipulation requires utmost care and great, foresightful prudence - instead of changing the rules underpinning international affairs one must learn how to act within the close confinements of an already established system. Similarly to Barnett Brzezinski wishes to delineate the margins of US foreign policy for the upcoming decades. Where Barnett and Brzezinski disagree is the role of the U.S. in world affairs: Barnett is convinced of the progressive expansion of the United States' military and ideological influence, while Brzezinski notes that its "leadership is increasingly questioned".¹¹⁰ Instances of terrorism, small-scale conflicts, and bad leadership in the Gap are, however, not the prime concern of Brzezinski when he notes that "terrorism can intensify international turmoil but it cannot define its substance".¹¹¹ Much more attention should instead be paid to the system-level dimension of the international, and the fact that the ascension of some Asian economies disturbs the prevalent balance of power.¹¹² Despite the relative decline of Western hegemony the U.S. is still in a position to manage the transition and assert itself, if not as hegemon then at least as a remaining super power: as "balancer and conciliator between major powers in the East"¹¹³ - and not as a Gap-Leviathan.

In terms of the notions of power and order that underlies *Strategic Vision* one can identify two separate operational layers: a mode of power that is active exclusively at the domestic level, and another one which gets mobilized by the state on an international level.

¹¹⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision. America and the Crisis of Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), 21.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 16.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 185.

In order to understand how power works at the domestic level, it is necessary to pay close attention to the strategic assets at a state's disposal, namely its capabilities. Brzezinski comes up with at least five different categories that are of importance for evaluating the endogenously generated strength of a state: these are economic, material, political, geographical, and ideological in nature.¹¹⁴ The first category, economic performance, is of outmost importance, since the global ranking of power has changed dramatically due to the economic success of some Asian states.¹¹⁵ There exists a power-economy nexus, and the strength of a state is inseparably tied to its commercial basis.¹¹⁶ It is hence in the interest of a state to cultivate and develop its capabilities as far as possible - and in order to do that it has the opportunity to work across the entire spectrum of power: it can take care of a decaying national infrastructure by means of public contracts, direct investment, and subsidies (direct power)¹¹⁷; a gridlocked and partisan political system can be fixed through institutional reform (institutional power)¹¹⁸; social unrest, income inequality, and stagnating social mobility ought to be tackled by a new consensus between capital and labour (structural power, i.e. the *New Deal*)¹¹⁹; and a demos susceptible for reactive mobilization could be united under the umbrella of a narrative that conveys a sense of purpose, pride, strength, and progression (productive power, i.e. the *American Dream*).¹²⁰

However, on the international level the multiple resources at a state's disposal quickly collapse into a national-power-approach in which constitutive elements (structural and productive alike) do not resonate in international affairs. Brzezinski emphasizes that patterns of order in the international realm are predominantly dependent on an international pecking order, which is influenced by the capabilities actors are able to mobilize. The best strategy for survival in the international realm is to accumulate a sufficient amount of resources that allow a

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 46-62.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 16.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 17-20.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 51.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 53.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 48.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 52.

state to pursue its national interest free from the interference of others.¹²¹ A rising China counts as a powerful actor, not by virtue of successfully translating all four dimensions of power into its international conduct, but due to the fact that it marshals direct, institutional, structural, and productive forces for the purpose of increasing its national power.¹²² The parallels to Ratzel and Kjellen are immediately visible: states develop their *Hilfsquellen* (capabilities, c.f. Ratzel) for the purpose of achieving autarky (c.f. Kjellen). Constitutive forms of power are exogenous to the international - they are mobilized for developing capabilities, but they do not spill over into global politics. International politics is then primarily characterized by the workings of compulsory power. Brzezinski acknowledges however that institutional power can play a decisive role in international politics as well. Institutional power is endogenous to international politics since states can attempt to position themselves most favorably within the system by means of building alliances destined to alter the international pecking-order: “America can play a constructive role in promoting restraint between the key players (...) through active political, diplomatic, and economic support for a regional balance of power”.¹²³ Power, and the resulting patterns of order in international affairs, are then characterized by a second, considerably thinner, yet less centralized institutional layer which sits on top of the already discussed compulsory basis.

3. Conclusion: the power-trap and the ontology of political space

It was the main purpose of the preceding analysis to expose the type of power predominantly mobilized in classical and neoclassical discourses of IR and geopolitics. The analysis was based on the working hypothesis that the ability of the discipline to theorize the nature of geopolitical space depends heavily on the underlying notion of authority, through which the ontological constitution of the international is framed. To recall, critical geopolitics (most notably Agnew)

¹²¹ Schmidt, “Competing Realist Conceptions of Power”, 537.

¹²² Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision*, 23.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 191.

succeeded in reframing geopolitics' understanding of space by means of abandoning its territorial focus - Agnew attempted quit literarily to evade the territorial trap. To paraphrase Agnew: this section of the thesis wishes to evade the power-trap. The chapter opened with the argument that classical geopolitics exposes a narrow focus on direct and compulsive forms of power. This leads the discipline into a framing of geopolitical space as an assemblage of discrete and hermetic entities, dominated by a quantitatively limited set of actors that wield first and foremost subtractive or punitive power. It was further argued that power functions as an epistemic lens and that notions of order are functions of power. If the discipline would mobilize a greater variety of epistemic lenses when looking at international affairs it could arrive at a very different understanding of what *order* and *space* in geopolitics signifies.

The previous section clearly demonstrates that a red thread runs through the reviewed writings, and that their exposed vision of international affairs is almost exclusively based on direct forms of power and centralized visions of order. This insight is even more remarkable if one considers the heterogenous nature of the analyzed texts: almost 130 years separate the earliest piece of writing (Ratzel, 1882) from the latest (Brzezinski, 2012). And while all authors speak to the wider discipline of geopolitics, their respective theories operate across a highly diverse set of political traditions: for Ratzel the state is a means to an end, a tool, whereas Kjellen claims that states are ethico-political phenomena and similar to organisms. Barnett is closely associated with liberal institutionalism and economic cosmopolitanism, while Brzezinski aligns with the tradition of defensive realism. What binds them together is their common framing of power in international affairs as necessarily compulsive. For Ratzel the state acts as the 'guardian of the soil' who responds reluctantly to the nation's natural urge to expand. In the emerging scramble over living-space it prevails because of its ability to mobilize compulsive forms of power. In Kjellen's anthropomorphic concept the nation and its territory coincide, and form the character and the body of the state, which must wield compulsory means if it wants to survive in the epic battle for *Lebensraum*. A century later Barnett proclaims the United States as

the ‘guardian of globalization’, whose expanding frontiers must be backed by military force. Brzezinski’s much more cautious policy-proposals rest heavily on a national power approach in which a state’s chances of survival depends on its ability to translate domestic assets into military-backed foreign policy actions.

Bottom line all four authors do indeed expose a heavy reliance on compulsory forms of power in international affairs. This is problematic, as Barnett and Duvall point out, because the “failure to develop alternative conceptions of power limits the ability of international relations scholars to understand how global outcomes are produced and how actors are differentially enabled and constrained to determine their fates”.¹²⁴ The exposed narrow focus on compulsory power impacts on how the discipline conceives the possibility of order in international affairs, which is, in the cases at hand, necessarily dependent on a central orderer who organizes space by potentially violent means. If power is predominantly framed as being compulsive, the international is ontologically constituted around centralized clusters of order-making mechanisms: Ratzel’s guardians of the soil, Kjellen’s state-organisms, Barnett’s Gap Leviathan, and Brzezinski’s international pecking order of states.

¹²⁴ Barnett & Duvall, “Power in International Politics”, 41.

CHAPTER THREE

III | THE EARLY ANARCHISTS

1. Introduction: the anarchist tradition of political thought

Chapter II diagnosed a general lack of productive (or constituent) power in IR-theory and discussed the potential implications for the study of world politics. The upcoming three chapters depart from this initial analysis, and ask to what extent the anarchist tradition of political thought would be capable of addressing the absence of constituent power in IR-theory. Is the tradition in the position to successfully institutionalize constituent power in IR? And, more specifically, which author(s) are best suited for this particular task? How would such a mobilization of constituent power look in concrete terms? And how would a joint deployment of anarchism and constituent power resonate with IR's power-discourse?

Towards that end chapter III takes a closer look at mutualist, collectivist, communist, and individualist strands of anarchist political theory, and aims at presenting a series of theoretical approaches who might be capable of evading and circumnavigating the previously identified power-trap. The authors chosen for this first round of evaluation are Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Michael Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, William Godwin, Max Stirner, and Gustav Landauer. Chapter

III is of a largely descriptive and deliberately broad nature, and aims at presenting the often diverging trajectories of a philosophical tradition hitherto neglected in IR-theory. The chapter performs preparatory or contextualizing work for chapter IV, which then deals much more explicitly with constituent force in the context of Proudhon's theory of power. Due to the close connection between chapter III and IV the transition from the former to the latter proceeds without a separate conclusion. This conclusion, which reflects on the co-mobilization of anarchism and constituent power, is provided for at the end of chapter IV.

2. Anarchist key-authors: surveying 19th-century anarchism

2.1 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

“Liberty is not the Daughter but the Mother of Order”

Social individualism constitutes the point of departure of Proudhon's political theory. In his narrative the individual receives priority for all types of normative reasoning, and constitutes the starting point, as well as the ultimate goal, of community.¹²⁵ The social-individualist ontology evolves in concentric circles on three stages: justice does not derive from a distant and abstract principle (such as god or reason) - it is rather the individual which constitutes the primary source of ethics and morality. The individual, however, does not exist in isolation and solitude, and is deeply rooted in social environments and communities of various types and scales (the second circle). The third layer comprises of the norms and institutions which have been developed within a specific social setting. These practices feed back into the individual and shape the moral intuition of the person - a process that can be beneficial, but equally derogatory to the composition of moral instincts.¹²⁶ Although Proudhon might look like an idealist at first glance his anarchism draws from a rationalist

¹²⁵ George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (New York: Meridian Books, 1962), 91.

¹²⁶ Alex Prichard, “Justice, Order and Anarchy: The International Political Theory of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 3 (2007): 630.

perfectionist epistemology and a semi-teleological concept of history.¹²⁷ In *Justice in the Revolution and Church* he emphasizes mankind's capacity for rationality and portrays historical progress as a quasi-deterministic process.¹²⁸ Accordingly human nature is, at least to a certain degree, unalterable, and basic traces of moral knowledge are always already present in the person.¹²⁹ It is contestable whether Proudhon can be regarded as a utopian thinker: in *General Idea of Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* he parades a believe in the perfectibility of man, whilst regarding the process of moral evolution as indefinite.¹³⁰ The process is hence open-ended and *utopia* can never be reached. Proudhon's anarchism becomes evident in his comments on government and statism in *General Idea of Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*. He perceives both as an insult to mankind's immanent morality and the rational process in which justice unfolds in the course of history. To be governed meant for Proudhon to be "authorized, recommended, admonished, prevented, reformed, set right, corrected", all in the name of an obscure public good.¹³¹ Instead of deriving the conditions for authority from governance, government, and public law he recommends their replacement with contracts that are negotiated individually between political subjects and have the purpose of bringing back autonomy, responsibility, and justice to the social realm.

Three core elements of Proudhon's philosophy need to be regarded as genuinely innovative: the federal principle, the concept of socio-economic mutualism, and his takes on property. In *The Principle of Federation* Proudhon elaborates extensively on a form of government which abandons centralization and rests instead on federal arrangements. Federalism represents the embodiment of freedom, as it is conducive to the truly anarchist principle of self-

¹²⁷ Richard J.F. Day, *Gramsci is Dead - Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 112.

¹²⁸ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Die Gerechtigkeit in der Revolution und in der Kirche. Neue Principien praktischer Philosophie* (Hamburg: Otto Meißner, 1858).

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *General Idea of Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Freedom Press, 1851/1923), 234.

¹³¹ Ibid.

government.¹³² In this reading government has a rather positive connotation and is no longer perceived as coercive, but instead as a platform conducive to anarchist political activities. The ensuing federation should ideally comprise of multiple units of property-owning, independent labour-associations. Certain forms of stratification would be permissible in order to initiate and coordinate political action.¹³³ Likewise one will find in *The Principle of Federation* a proposal for an exchange-system between political units governed on the basis of mutualist practices. The functioning of such a regime is supposed to be ensured by a number of imperatives, i.e. respect for individual liberty, reciprocal benefits of capital, and the constitution of government by industrial groups.¹³⁴ *What is Property?* elaborates on the relation between autonomy and property, and provides a strong argument against socialist and communist visions of the nationalization of private wealth.¹³⁵ Proudhon viewed private property as necessity for obtaining autonomy, and labeled the aforementioned collectivist ideologies ‘enemies of freedom’: “The communists in general are under a strange illusion: fanatics of state power, they claim that they can use the state authority to ensure, by measures of restitution, the well-being of the workers who created the collective wealth. As if the individual came into existence after society, and not society after the individual”.¹³⁶ *What is Property?* speaks favorable of private ownership, while arguing for the monitoring of its usage by the public. This highly differentiated view puts Proudhon in equidistance to authoritarian socialists and communists on the one side, and radical capitalists on the other.¹³⁷

Proudhon’s political philosophy is also characterized by an overly optimistic take on the possibilities offered by decentralization and contract-based governance. As already mentioned above, *The Principle of Federation* suggests to

¹³² Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *The Principle of Federation and the Need to Reconstitute the Party of Revolution*, 1863, trans. Richard Vernon, <http://www.ditext.com/proudhon/federation/federation.html>.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *What is Property? An Inquiry into the Principle of Right and of Government* (LaVergne: Bibliobazaar, 2007).

¹³⁶ Proudhon, cited in Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), 242.

¹³⁷ Proudhon, *What is Property?*

replace public law with individualized contracts, effectively permitting each citizen, town, union, etc. to formulate its own laws. Moral relativism is certainly looming here, and under conditions of true ‘self-law’ (*autonomy*) anti-emancipatory practices such as slavery would become possible. In *The Principle of Federation* Proudhon falls victim to his own rationalistic and teleological method, and to an overly faithful believe in the ‘invisible hand’ of immanent justice. By means of relying on these forces, and by claiming that if they were given the opportunity to unfold in an unrestricted fashion, he adopts a problematic fatalism in which an abstract principle of justice trumps the concrete moral reasoning of the individual. Deriving from this assumption Proudhon introduces an equally problematic divide between politics and economics, which gives rise to a heroic discourse in which the latter receives priority over the former: “political functions have been reduced to industrial functions, and social order arises from nothing but transactions and exchange. Each may then say that he is the absolute ruler of himself”.¹³⁸ While dismissing the model of society governed by a state-centric logic, Proudhon puts much faith in the problem-solving capacity of economic rationales, while leaving the question of how to address and prevent potentially emerging localist and parochial tendencies unanswered.

2.2 Michael Bakunin

“Freedom without Socialism is privilege and injustice, and Socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality”

Bakunin counts as the founder of a thread of collectivist anarchism and focuses in his works predominantly on the organizational, emancipatory, and revolutionary potential of groups, communities, and other types of associations.¹³⁹ The collectivists depart from a different social ontology than the aforementioned mutualists (i.e. Proudhon) and hesitate to put the individual into the centre of theoretical and normative reasoning. The singular person is rather

¹³⁸ Proudhon, cited in Day, *Gramsci is Dead*, 111.

¹³⁹ Michael Bakunin, “The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State”, in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, ed. Sam Dolgoff (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 259 ff.

understood as part of larger, collective entities. While Proudhon had a rather Kantian understanding of reason and rationality, Bakunin opts for a slightly more Hegelian interpretation in which reason can only develop through the very practices of a society. The imperative of community-centrism is formulated in *The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State*, which argues that humans are unable to prosper if they position themselves outside of societal arrangements.¹⁴⁰ Even strong and intelligent individuals cannot escape the attractions of solidarity, as it is claimed in *Marxism, Freedom, and the State*.¹⁴¹ Based on these assumptions Bakunin develops the following definition of liberty and autonomy: it is the collectivist's attempt to realize "the liberty which consists in the full development of all the material, intellectual and moral powers which are to be found as faculties latent in everybody, the liberty which recognized no other restrictions than those which are traced for us by the laws of our *own nature*".¹⁴² The *Revolutionary Catechism* defines, complementary to the preceding formulation, justice as equality¹⁴³, and freedom as the "absolute rejection of every authority including that which sacrifices freedom for the convenience of the state".¹⁴⁴ Bakunin drew a sharp line between society and the state and opposed in particular Rousseau's idea of the social contract. The argument developed in *Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism* highlights mankind's inherent sociability, which was always exercised in various social contexts, and designates states as effectively artificial, liberty-depleting constructs: "The state is in one way an immediate product of nature. Unlike society, it does not precede the awakening of reason in men"¹⁴⁵ and further "In either case it dominates society and tends to absorb it completely".¹⁴⁶ *Statism and*

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 271.

¹⁴¹ Michael Bakunin, *Marxism, Freedom and the State*, trans. K.J. Kenafick (London: Freedom Press, 1950).

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Michael Bakunin, "Revolutionary Catechism", in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, ed. Sam Dolgoff (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 76 ff.

¹⁴⁴ Dolgoff, cited in Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 277.

¹⁴⁵ Michael Bakunin, *Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism*, speech delivered September 1867, Marxist.org, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/various/reasons-of-state.htm>.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Anarchism draws from the state-society-dichotomy and argues that human organization should follow a clear bottom-up movement and prioritize community-practices, while limiting the influence of supposedly higher-ranking entities such as the state.¹⁴⁷ Since man is not only “the most individualistic being on earth”¹⁴⁸, but also “the most social”¹⁴⁹, it would be a misconception to deduce organizational modes from transcendental principles.¹⁵⁰

The most important contribution of Bakunin’s collectivist anarchism is certainly his recognition of the revolutionary potential of all parts of society. While early marxists tended to label peasants or the lower working class as *Lumpenproletariat*, it was Bakunin who insisted on a holistic notion of social change which attempts to mobilize all members of a society - not only an elitist, urban, industrial proletariat.¹⁵¹ The tension between marxism and collectivist anarchism becomes most evident in their respective understanding of revolutionary practices: while marxists didn’t shy away from potentially authoritarian and centralizing practices, involving the seizure of state power, the nationalization of the means of production, and the dictatorship of the proletariat, (collectivist) anarchists opt for a libertarian and federal organization under the control (not the dictatorship!) of workers associations.¹⁵² The skepticism against the marxist interpretation of Plato’s philosopher-king, and the fear of the rise of extensive bureaucracy or an ‘expertocracy’, is uttered in *On Science and Authority*. While Bakunin can certainly not be labeled a leftwing luddite or an enemy of scientific reason, he voices concerns against the deployment of science as a means of governance.¹⁵³ This skepticism derives from his latent idealism in which reason is not born outside society but rather in its very centre. Finally, and in respect to the desired form of societal organization, it can be said

¹⁴⁷ Michael Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, ed. Marshall Shatz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹⁴⁸ Bakunin, *Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism*.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Day, *Gramsci is Dead*, 115.

¹⁵¹ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 295 ff.

¹⁵² Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 142.

¹⁵³ Michael Bakunin, “Authority and Science”, in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, ed. Sam Dolgoff (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 226 ff.

that although Proudhon and Bakunin departed from different analytical plateaus, both do arrive at a similar conclusion when it comes to the formal structure of the post-statist world. Bakunin's *Revolutionary Catechism* advocates for federal and communal autonomy, and suggests an association of free federations which are supposed to be structured in a bottom-up-like fashion, and divided into provinces, nations, and, eventually, the *United States of Europe*.¹⁵⁴

While the holistic revolutionary concept of Bakunin is certainly a strength of his approach, the vision and the coordination of the revolutionary process gives rise to concern. Bakunin concluded in *Statism and Anarchy* that only a violent uprising will be capable of releasing a durable revolutionary momentum. He also introduced a clear distinction between the pre- and the post-revolutionary world, and leaves little room for transitional stages, while advocating instead for harsh and violent moments of rupture. There is no space left for incremental efforts of change (like in Landauer's approach), and a stale aftertaste remains due to the potentially totalizing practices and destructive forces which might accompany such substantial and severe instances of transformation. *Revolutionary Organization and the Secret Society* confirms this apprehension, and Bakunin seems to have lost all faith in the revolutionary potential of the masses when he suggests to engineer revolutionary moments, and to force uprisings through the provocative actions of professional insurgents.¹⁵⁵ The question is, of course, what kind of revolution is triggered by such a potentially violent strategy? In the worst of all cases it might put an institutionalized, professional class of vanguards in power, who understand themselves as keepers of a revolutionary grail, and are prepared to defend their allegedly sacred achievements at all cost.

2.3 Peter Kropotkin

"Nature has thus to be recognized as the first ethical teacher of man"

Complementary to the collectivist Bakunin and the mutualist Proudhon a third strand of anarchist thought was developed by Kropotkin: the anarchist

¹⁵⁴ Bakunin, "Revolutionary Catechism", 76 ff.

¹⁵⁵ Day, *Gramsci is Dead*, 115 f.

communist line of reasoning. This position rests, as formulated in *The Conquest of Bread*, on two pillars: *first*, the abolition of the state-form (a decidedly anarchist component), and *second*, a system of material distribution which would not be directly related to the labour-efforts of individual workers (the communist element).¹⁵⁶ Under such a regime Kropotkin wishes to introduce a type of hedonistic, post-scarcity, agro-industrial communism where “the greatest amounts of goods necessary to the well-being of all, with the least possible wast of human energy” is produced, and “after bread has been secured, leisure is the supreme aim”.¹⁵⁷ The anarchist component derives from, and is developed in more detail in, his most widely know piece *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. Departing from Darwin’s theory of evolution Kropotkin argues that sociability (mutual aid) is the most crucial factor for determining a species success in the process of evolution. While animals and humans who live in solitude are doomed, those who cooperate and work together have the greatest chances of survival. Struggle as such is not taking place within a species, but is rather directed against adverse conditions in nature. By refusing social darwinism and its radically individualist implications, Kropotkin interprets the theory of evolution from a mutual-aid-perspective. The unit of competition is then the species as a whole, and the unit who realizes cooperation best is likely to prevail.¹⁵⁸ Kropotkin deduces his anarchist theory from the implications of mutual aid: humans are characterized as *a priori* social beings, capable to organize communal life devoid of artificial, external impulses. Society and the state are hence essentially different: the former constitutes the ideal (read: natural) form of existence, whereas the state-form emerges at a later stage and usurps already existing structures: “the states, when they were called later into existence, simply took possession, in the interest of the minorities, of all the judicial, economical, and administrative functions which the village

¹⁵⁶ Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*, 1906, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/peter-kropotkin-the-conquest-of-bread>.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, 1902, http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_archives/kropotkin/mutaidcontents.html.

community already had exercised in the interest of all”.¹⁵⁹ In taking the next consequent step Kropotkin argues in *Modern Science and Anarchism* that the political theory of anarchism has nothing to do with metaphysics, dialectics, or normative reasoning, but is rather based on scientific insights: “Anarchism is a conception of the universe based on the mechanical interpretation of phenomena”, and further “which comprises the whole of nature, including the life of human societies and their economic, political, and moral problems. Its method is that of natural sciences, and every conclusion it comes to must be verified by this method if it pretends to be scientific”.¹⁶⁰ Prior to Kropotkin others have also made attempts to identify fixed rules and eternal patterns of order for the purpose of anchoring anarchism on firm methodological grounds. Kropotkin, however, was the first to derive an anarchist model of society from comparatively rigid, scientific investigations.

While the scientific method upon which Kropotkin bases his communist anarchism is extremely vulnerable to critique (see below), his investigations on the origins of the modern state are certainly enlightening. In *The State* Kropotkin elaborates further on the above mentioned distinction between society and state, and argues that the latter is not the only form of political organization adopted by humankind in the course of history. Before the emergence of nationally unified territories in the 16th and 17th century humans lived in clans and tribes, patriarchal families, federal communities and villages, free cities and guilds, and adopted the state-model only very recently. In a familiar anarchist fashion he criticizes the monopolization of political power by a singular sovereign agency, and argues against the concentration of social life in the hands of a few politically powerful agents, mainly due to the potential dangers of oppression, extensive policing, and anti-emancipatory politics.¹⁶¹ Kropotkin’s genealogy of the modern state is of importance since it opens up room for conceptual maneuver: so far anarchists did an excellent job in refuting the state, and point out why it is

¹⁵⁹ Kropotkin in *Mutual Aid*, cited in Day, *Gramsci is Dead*, 139.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁶¹ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 323.

undesirable or defective. By means of historicising developments towards more extensive and complex human communities Kropotkin goes a step further and presents the state as a historically contingent phenomenon which can only claim a transitional status. *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* might be particularly helpful in bolstering the argument against statist ‘one size fits all’-solutions. Kropotkin portrays society as an entity in permanent flux and argues that forms of statist organization should satisfy the demands of the community destined to be organized, not the other way around.

The most problematic issue with Kropotkin’s anarchist communism is the deployed scientific methodology. His anarchist theory tries to comprehend the origins of social phenomena by rooting them in a naturalist ontology. The past, present, and future of humankind are not understood as a set of man-made events, but are rather subordinated to the holistic dynamics of evolution and the mutual-aid-paradigm. As Marshall points out, Kropotkin can be easily attacked on the grounds of his semi-materialistic (actually naturalistic) philosophy, and the mechanistic fatalism deriving from it.¹⁶² One can be a materialist and still value the creative momentum arising from human-made institutions and practices. In Kropotkin’s narrative, however, the ideational element seems to be missing entirely, and agency gets subordinated to the supposedly mechanical forces of the universe.

2.4 William Godwin

“Morality is, if anything can be, fixed and immutable”

Godwin is regarded as the founder of anarchist political theory, despite never calling himself an anarchist. His major work *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* introduces one of the principles still held valid by the majority of anarchists today: in order to form a workable society only a limited amount of institutions is necessary, while an overly obtrusive regulatory corset can be severely damaging to the development of political freedom and social justice. Godwin’s concept of

¹⁶² Ibid., 336.

justice rests on two pillars: necessitarianism and immaterialism. While the latter acknowledges the existence of an external world created by human imaginability, the former highlights the workings of providence in an essentially rule-governed social environment. These rules, or first causes, are ‘reason’ and ‘justice’: immutable reason is the true legislator, and it should be society’s ultimate goal to interpret the laws of reason and justice through rational inquiry. While positive law is defective, the law of justice constitutes an irrefutable moral truth. When investigating questions of right and wrong humans are hence obliged by the duty of private judgement: “man must recognise what is right by his own understanding, and here it is evidence, not authority, that should move him”.¹⁶³ The emphasis is on ‘recognise’, since justice will not reveal itself, but has to be uncovered through individual reasoning (the aforementioned private judgement). This judgement must be private, since no institution can replace individual accounts of responsibility. Godwin displaces Plato’s philosopher-king and brings reason, as well as the duty to make use of it, into the political realm. In respect to the organisation of communal life Godwin favours a strictly administrative public, one that is mainly occupied with collective inquiries into the nature of justice, while abstaining from concrete matters of enforcement.¹⁶⁴

Godwin’s political theory offers three particular advantages: *first*, it introduces a sort of cosmic optimism, which rests on the assumptions that sociability and justice are already present in humans, and that man does not necessarily have to be man’s wolf. This optimistic take on human nature opens up the possibility of infinite perfectibility through education: if man gets the opportunity to be good, he will most likely do good. *Second*, the idea of infinite perfectibility also creates room for a velvet revolution and the unfolding of social change in incremental steps. Education and the emancipation of small groups (i.e. anarchist affinity-groups) are instrumental to the realization of liberty. This notion constructs a counterweight to the violent revolutionary visions of later anarchist such as Bakunin. *Third*, the act-utilitarianism on which Godwin’s

¹⁶³ Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 67.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

philosophy is based emphasizes that every case is a rule in itself, and that unique social circumstances should not be forced into a procrustean bed. In a modern context this argument can be turned against the one-size-fits-all narrative of liberal universalism.

As problematic appears the fatalistic belief in the power of reason. Although Godwin rejects the liberal ideal of law as a necessary evil for the protection of individual freedoms, his political theory remains liberal in its core, mainly because of its orthodox treatment of private judgement. Instead of investigating in desirable man-made principles of government, Godwin's relies on a supposedly universal principle of justice, which can only be encountered through the rigid application of reason itself. Godwin promotes a very Kantian ideal of politics, without being aware of the contradictory implications of such an approach, especially if contrasted with the previously highlighted act-utilitarianism.

2.5 Max Stirner

"We have only one relations to each other, that of usability, of utility, of use"

Contrary to the philosophers introduced above Stirner does not belong into the collectivist/mutualist camp of anarchist political thought. Rather he needs to be understood as an extreme individualist and as a proponent of individualistic anarchism.¹⁶⁵ Stirner never published extensively, and apart from some minor works (e.g. *The false principle of our education*) *The Ego and His Own* remains his sole, yet invaluable, contribution to the anarchist canon. The central category in Stirner's writing is the role played by 'ego'.¹⁶⁶ The ego - the will of the self - must be regarded as the starting point for all social and political reasoning, and it should be the primary goal of humankind to allow for the ego's unrestricted development. While the ego itself consists of three elements, namely desire, intellect, and will, it is the last factor which receives major attention: will dominates the ego, it subordinates desire and intellect, and it seeks *power over*

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 80 f.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 85.

things, person, and even the individual itself. The ego is the moral reference-point of Stirner's philosophy and holds an almost sacred status: it is non-perfectible since every individual ego has always already reached its finite stage: "We are perfect altogether, and on the whole earth there is not one man who is a sinner".¹⁶⁷ And it can be regarded as a sort of perpetual motion machine, overflowing of literal ego-centrism and I-relatedness, constantly reassuring itself of its primacy and superiority over anything else: "I am nothing in the sense of emptiness, but I am the creative nothing, the nothing of which I myself as creator create everything".¹⁶⁸ The ego is by no means dependent on existing in concert with others, but rather represents the most extreme form of an atomistic concept of the self.¹⁶⁹ Stirner's aggressive individualism rejects the existence of immutable moral laws, and proposes instead will and desire as the only significant legislative sources: "I can make very little of myself, but this little is everything, and is better than what I allow to be made out of me by the might of others".¹⁷⁰ Consequently no social code, no moral obligation, and no artificial construction of human origin shall obstruct 'the march of ego in the world', to paraphrase Hegel. It is no surprise that Stirnerian philosophy is less than convinced of the value of positive freedom.¹⁷¹ Positive freedom is nothing more than "slavishly performing ones duty"¹⁷², and real freedom can only be found in *ownness*: the existence of the self (and its will) by its own means and for its own sake, achieved through uncompromising self-mastership and unconditional self-possession. Freedom can only be realized in a situation where this unobstructed awareness of one's ownness and the unhindered exercise of will is possible: "All freedom is essentially - *self-liberation* - that I can have only so much freedom as I *procure for myself by my ownness*".¹⁷³ The culmination-point of liberation can be found in the

¹⁶⁷ Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, trans. Steven T. Byington, ed. James J. Martin (New York: Dover Publications, 2005), 359.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 205.

¹⁷² Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 227.

¹⁷³ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 167.

figure of the conscious egoist, an inward-looking, self-sustaining subjectivity, existing *in, for, and through* itself, effectively representing the pure essence and the most unhindered expressions of one's ego's will. The only truth for Stirner's conscious egoist is liberty - liberty represented by ego's will. A conscious egoist rejects not only ethics and right, but is also unwilling to bind him- or herself to any sort of *permanent* human association. Whereas Proudhon or Bakunin have stressed the importance of the social bond for the ethical development of the individual, Stirner labels any sort of association, be it the state or society, as potentially coercive and latently oppressive. Instead he proposes a *union of egoists* in which individuals are recognised not as part of a collectivity but as irreducible individuality, and in which *conscious egoists* can unite and part freely. Since no moral bond or normative consensus is required for the formation of this type of association the relation between subjects is characterised by pure instrumentality: "For me you are nothing but - my food, even as I too am food upon and turned to use by you. We have only one relation to each other, that of usability, of utility, of use".¹⁷⁴

Although Stirner sits quite uneasily in the anarchist canon he has made an invaluable contribution towards theorizing the basis of non-hegemonic communities through the most radical and consequent application of social individualism. Stirner's ideal of the conscious egoist is nothing less than individualism thought through until its very end. The union of egoists suggests that under the absence of any type of order (not even thin patterns of society) there can indeed be structure and justice. The forceful application of the ideal of negative freedom needs to be regarded as a powerful thought-experiment which pays attention to the question where an aggressive individualism will lead. Stirner's philosophy counts as the anti-thesis to radical power politics, and it offers an opportunity to challenge Hobbesian narratives of the 'state of nature', or Machiavellian assertions on the purpose of politics. Stirner counts as anti-Hobbesian since he draws an entirely different picture of society under the

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 269 f.

absence of a centralized orderer. Whilst Hobbes feared the rise of an all-embracing civil war, Stirner suggests that conscious self-centrism prevents conflict, since man will retreat into solitude while having no intrinsic interest in inflicting harm on others. Stirner can also be regarded as anti-Machiavellian: whereas Machiavelli emphasizes the *will of power over others*, Stirnerian philosophy is more concerned with the *will of power over oneself*. Power is not an end in itself, but, if anything, a means for achieving the fulfillment of the ego. Only if this fulfillment is genuinely self-motivated it can also be sustainable. Stirner's latent Hegelianism, and his implicit drawings from the master-slave-relationship, prevents him from turning his worship of egoism into a feast of power and sheer arbitrariness. If the egoist wants to be really free he must derive his sincerity from himself alone, and not from his recognition as a master by others. If the strong egoist oppresses weaker ones, his egoism becomes relational and dependent on the acceptance by outsiders. The conscious egoist can only be really free if he is fully aware of himself through endogenous affirmation. A Machiavellian scenario in which the prince does as he pleases would be unthinkable, since the egoist would realize that the entering of a master-slave-relationship is the end of his freedom. The conscious egoist is only sure of himself and of nothing else.

The downside of Stirner's philosophy lies in the fact that it can (and should) hardly move beyond the realm of a thought-experiment. The anarchist literature is of course quite fond of concepts that theorize the possibility of domination-free association, but Stirner's retreat into anti-social forms of existence, and his dogmatic reliance on negative freedom, have little to offer to collectivist/mutualist strands of thought. Anarchists have so far stressed the realization of individual freedom *in and through* collective agency. They strove for a reconciliation of the particular and the whole, and understood that the autonomy of the person has to be a prime goal, but that this autonomy can only be achieved in relational and mutually constitutive social contexts. The rejection (or criticism) of the artificial state-form is a legitimate strategy if one wishes to highlight the importance of organically grown social arrangements. The dismissal of society, not because it is coercive but has the potential to be so, is however not

conductive. In fact, one can argue that Stirner's conscious egoism is the best justification for the existence of the state-form in the first place: the Stirnerian subject would indeed feel quite well in an entirely rationalized or bureaucratized environment, governed predominantly by instrumental, formalized relationships. In this respect one has to be very cautious about the broader repercussions of a *union of egoists*.

2.6 Gustav Landauer

"The state is a condition, a certain relationship among human beings, a mode of behavior between them"

Landauer is, similar to the earlier discussed Proudhon, a proponent of mutualist anarchism and social individualism. Mühsam characterized Landauer's anarchism as the ideal of a "social order founded upon a *voluntary* contract".¹⁷⁵ According to Arnold anarchism of the social-individualist type has to be understood "in the sense of an order that is *organic* in its structure, and order bases on free-willing associations".¹⁷⁶ By following the *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft*-distinction (community/society) of Toennies Landauer differentiates between the community as an organic, long-standing order, and society as atomized, mechanical, and transitory form of association. Landauer had a particularly positive, and sometimes overly idealistic understanding of the *Volk* (folk) and the *Nation* (nation) in an libertarian rather than an authoritarian sense, and understood them as communities of practice, bound together by intersubjectively shared norms and customs. The nation is framed as a stepping stone (and not an obstacle) to internationalism, since it exists "within the everwinding circles from the individual to the whole of humanity".¹⁷⁷ Landauer's anarchism thus introduces a positive idea of nationalism which is not exclusive or xenophobic, but demonstrates instead the existence of community-structures above and

¹⁷⁵ Larry Gambone, *For Community: The Communitarian Anarchism Of Gustav Landauer*, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/larry-gambone-for-community-the-communitarian-anarchism-of-gustav-landauer>, 5.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 412.

beyond the formalized, artificial boundaries of the state. The state is then not only interfering with the people's unity, but is one of the greatest obstacles to the political unification of humankind, since "states are natural enemies, nations are not".¹⁷⁸ Despite his rejection of the state Landauer is unwilling to go along with the diagnosis of former anarchist philosophers who declared it as essentially alien to human nature. Landauer's understanding of the state is much more nuanced and insightful. The state - although defective and insufficient - turns the will of the people into institutionalized structures, and it represents their relationships towards each other: "The state is a condition, a certain relationship among human beings, a mode of behaviour between them; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently toward one another. (...) *We are the state, and we shall continue to be the state until we have created the institutions that form a real community and society of men*".¹⁷⁹ In this reading the state becomes a Janus-faced figure: it represents "social death"¹⁸⁰, while being produced and reproduced by the common will and the intersubjectively accepted practices of the people. The individual does, however, never fully accept this form of association - it anticipates the involuntary nature of society, and intrinsically desires an organic, naturally grown, and more substantial form of community.¹⁸¹ While the *state* is the 'association per force', born by and sustained through coercion, the *nation* - the *Volk* - is regarded as 'association per affinity', emerging and living through voluntariness. *For Socialism* attempts to deliver an answer to the question how to escape this strained relation: Landauer opts for an overcoming of the state through a reconfiguration of mankind's relation towards itself. In the course of this reconfiguration it is necessary to build new institutions alongside the already existing ones, and to render the old ones redundant.¹⁸² Since the state is a "condition of relationships among subjects"¹⁸³ only a structural renewal will pave

¹⁷⁸ Gambone, *For Community*, 13.

¹⁷⁹ Gustav Landauer, *Die Revolution* (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2003) - emphasis added.

¹⁸⁰ Gustav Landauer, *Aufruf zum Sozialismus* (Basel: Synergia Verlag, 2012).

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Day, *Gramsci is Dead*, 124.

the way towards spiritual reforms: “there comes a time in the history of a social structure, which is a structure only as long as individuals nourish it with their validity, when those living shy away from it as a strange ghost from the past, and create new groupings instead. Thus I have withdrawn my love, reason, and obedience, and my will from that which I call the ‘state’. That I am able to do so depends on my will”.¹⁸⁴

Landauer’s proves to be valuable for the anarchist canon for several reasons: *first* and foremost because he provides a foil for an anarchist auto-critique and counters Bakunin’s idea of a necessarily violent, vanguard-driven revolution. Revolutionary means and post-revolutionary ends should, and can, never be separated from each other. A tyrannical revolution will produce tyrannical outcomes and enforces, in the worst of all cases, the state’s basis of legitimacy. Furthermore Landauer is supportive of a holistic revolution through the vast reconfiguration of social relations. The vanguard-led revolution of Bakunin does not fit very well into Landauer’s narrative, mainly due to his negligence of sustainable transformation through changes of social practices. Contrary to Kropotkin’s evolutionary anarchism, Landauer argues against naturalist ontologies as justifications for anarchist politics. Landauer values the concept of mutual aid and cooperation, but stresses the necessity of an immanent mutualism, which derives from the people’s will, and not from a supposedly natural impetus. Beyond the opportunity of formulating a mild yet powerful auto-critique Landauer dovetails - to a certain degree - with his much more extreme and individualistic counterpart Stirner. While this seems to be counter-intuitive at first glance, the overlaps become apparent when looking into the respective contributions to *anti-* and *micro-politics*. Both, Stirner and Landauer, searched eagerly for structures and strategies which would allow the individual to live outside (or at least parallel) to mainstream society. Stirner simply suggests not to participate in existing institutions and live a life characterized by radical self-relatedness. Landauer develops a more positive account of anti-politics and

¹⁸⁴ Landauer, cited in Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 413.

chooses sociability over solitude. Yet, similar to Stirner, he advocates a revolutionary strategy of non-participation into existing institutions. A downside of Landauer's philosophy can be found in his overly optimistic attitude towards organically grown communities. He pays little attention to the coercive potential of local practices and phenomena such as parochialism, hyper-nationalism, or clientelism. By means of lacking a healthy Foucaultian pessimism in regards to symbolic violence, Landauer's philosophy tends to replace the hegemonic and formalized power-structures of the state with the decentralized and informal forces of discourse.

CHAPTER FOUR

IV | CONSTITUENT ANARCHY

1. Introduction: anarchism and constituent power

While the preceding chapter offered a platform to understand the varieties of 19th-century anarchist political thought, and made a first attempt of highlighting the importance of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's work in regard to serving as an anarchist bridge-head into IR, this chapter will explain in a more detailed fashion why the works of Proudhon have been chosen for a re-evaluation of the anarchy-problematique in IR. In the following chapters it is argued that IR suffers from a systemic neglect of constituent power among its conceptual ranks, and that a re-framing of international politics along the lines of constituent power offers new perspectives on ontology (ch. VI), agency (ch. VII), and ethics international affairs (ch. VIII). This chapter ties these somewhat separate strings of the argument - anarchism in IR and constituent power in IR - together, and argues that Proudhon's political thought is underpinned by a decidedly constituent interpretation of power, which is ready for mobilization in IR-theory.

Chapter IV is divided into three sections and underpinned by the following questions: (1) what is constituent power in the first place, how does it

differ from constituted power?; (2) who is capable of mobilizing constituent power and what types of agents wield constituent force?; (3) how is constituent power reflected in anarchist political theory, most notably in the works of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon?

The *second* section of this chapter clarifies the concept of constituent power and explores some of the debate's capillaries. By means of focusing on three prominent participants to the debate it is intended to display the vast overlaps between their respective positions, while simultaneously highlighting conceptual differences and disagreements. For Hardt constituent power is a potentially universal force which stands in opposition to sovereignty, whereas Lindahl highlights constituent power's reliance on a necessarily bound nomos and an initially passive demos. For Kalyvas the demos possesses agentic force from the very outset (contra Lindahl), and there exists a compatibility between democratic force and sovereignty (contra Hardt). Section *three* takes a closer look into the conceptions of agency in the context of constituent power, and discuss two additional contributions to the debate. This section engages in a comparative reading of Hardt and Negri's *Empire* and *Multitude*, as well as Schmitt's *Political Theology* and *The Concept of the Political*. The purpose of the analysis is to determine which agentic forces are deemed capable of mobilizing constituent power. The *fourth* and *fifth* part of the chapter engage in a contextualized assessment of Proudhon's anarchist philosophy through the lens of constituent power.

2. Approaching constituent power

Hardt's interpretation of constituent power bears a strong republican imprint and is presented as the "the essence of modern democracy and modern revolution".¹⁸⁵ The necessary co-articulation of the concept's core qualities - namely its essentially collaborative nature in combination with its inherently transformative potentiality - draw a firm line of demarcation between constituent power and its 'alter ego', constituted power. While the former is inscribed in

¹⁸⁵ Michael Hardt, "Three Keys to Understanding Constituent Power", in *Insurgencies. Constituent Power and the Modern State*, by Antonio Negri (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), vii.

society's ability to mobilized and harvest its own transformative capabilities, the latter attempts to capture such democratic forces and turn them back against their source in an attempt to command and control society. Constituent power must be regarded as a decidedly historical force, since it displaces the status quo in favour of novel socio-political arrangements.¹⁸⁶ Constituted power, on the contrary, is characterized by its decidedly a-historical appearance, which stems from a tendency to crystallize and stiffen prevalent social divisions and hierarchies.¹⁸⁷ This firm division between what Agamben has term *life* vs. *law*, or *auctoritas* vs. *potestas*¹⁸⁸, leads Hardt towards the conclusion that a general incompatibility exists between constituent types of power on the one side, and sovereign notions of authority on the other. Both powers do exemplify moments of political exceptionalism. Yet, while sovereign force (constituted power) “is imposed on the constitution from above”, democratic force (constituent power) initiates an “‘exception’ that emerges from below”¹⁸⁹, which makes it dissimilar to its coercive counterpart.

Despite their equal importance in either making or maintaining political orders *constituent* and *constituted* power are not treated equally in political theory - in fact, the latter is often privileged over the former. This bias implies that control, command, and the tranquility of the present, are regarded as the ‘normal’ state of political affairs, as the core of what defines the political, while transformative passages are reduced to limited, scarce, and isolated episodes of unruliness and turmoil, which are captured quickly by the pacifying intervention of an arrestive sovereign force.¹⁹⁰ This heroic discourse privileges coercive order over supposed chaos, it pits sovereignty against anarchy, and institutes constituent power as the norm.¹⁹¹ In an attempt to break free from the constraints of the prevalent debate Hardt suggest, analogous to Negri, to conceive of constituent power not as an

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., viii.

¹⁸⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 86.

¹⁸⁹ Hardt, “Three Keys to Understanding Constituent Power”, ix.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., viii.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., viii.

afterthought of sovereign routine, but as the first cause of the political *per se*. Other than constituted power, which lingers on the surface of the political process and has a mostly distributive effect, constituent power possesses a more substantial, ontological status: “Constituted power is empty; it merely falls back on, contains, and recuperates the constituent forces” while “constituent power is primary in the sense that it is the locus of social creativity, political innovation, and historical movement”.¹⁹² By means of interrogating the hierarchical division between sovereignty/anarchy and constituted/constituent power Hardt directs attention to the productive forces of democratic immanence. The essence of the political is then not defined by an external, transcendental sovereign’s ability to maintain the status quo, but is rather inscribed in a democratic multitude’s immanent potential to challenge and displace the present state of affairs through acts of permanent, creative play.¹⁹³ Constituent power must hence be understood as the “the sole source of political creation”.¹⁹⁴

Lindahl’s take on constituent power is decidedly juridical and hinges at the ability to initiate and create novel legal orders.¹⁹⁵ Other than for Hardt, for whom constituent power operates below the surface of formalized politics, and resides in the ontological deep-structure of the political, Lindahl’s interpretation places constituent power into the heart of the legislative process. Hardt’s interpretation of constituent power is first and foremost structural, whereas Lindahl opts for a formal-juridical reading. For him constituent power “refers to the capacity to bring forth a new legal order, whether by revolutionary means or otherwise, in contrast to the capacity to enact legal norms with an extant legal order: constituted power”.¹⁹⁶ Constituent and constituted power are then strongly intertwined: while constituent power creates new types orders, constituted power

¹⁹² Ibid., viii.

¹⁹³ Ibid., ix.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., xi.

¹⁹⁵ Hans Lindahl, “Possibility, Actuality, Rupture: Constituent Power and the Ontology of Change”, *Constellations* 22, no. 2 (2015): 163.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

maintains them and enforces the rules upon which they rest. This constitutes a *first* important departure from Hardt's theory of constituent power, for whom the productive forces of creation (democratic immanence) and the coercive forces of control (transcendent sovereignty) are downright incompatible.

A *second* important difference between Hardt and Lindahl lies in their respective takes on the spatial arrangement of power's constituent loci. Hardt's immanent interpretation opens up the possibility to inscribe agency into a potentially boundless democratic multitude, whereas Lindahl's strong emphasis on legalism and law necessitates the existence of a bound political community, which implies the spatially delimited character of constituent power.¹⁹⁷ In siding with Arendt and her interpretation of *nomos* Lindahl proclaims: "the space of political community is necessarily bounded (...) [for which reason] no polity is thinkable that does not raise a claim to an inside as the community's own space".¹⁹⁸ This plea leads directly into a *third* important distinction between Lindahl and Hardt. Hardt's theory of constituent power depicts constituent forces as self-generative and capable of creating the conditions necessary for the exercise of their own agency. This claim is, from Lindahl's perspective, not defensible. Rather, the constituent agent depends itself on its constitution through an external force, which helps to define the demos in the first place. If constituent power is tied to the creation of novel legal norms, and if these legal norms can only exist in a closed community, some agent needs to designate the community (the 'us/we') and dedicating it as a political subject (one that is qualitatively different from an external 'them').¹⁹⁹ This move cannot be accomplished by the demos itself in an *ex nihilo* like fashion – in other words: the community does not know itself, or its boundaries, unless an external force,

¹⁹⁷ Hans Lindahl, "Democracy and the Symbolic Constitution of Society", *Ratio Juris* 11, no. 1 (1998): 15 ff.

¹⁹⁸ Hans Lindahl, "Give and take. Arendt and the *nomos* of political community", *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 32, no. 7 (2006): 882.

¹⁹⁹ Hans Lindahl, "Collective self-legislation as an *Actus Impurus*: a response to Heidegger's critique of European nihilism", *Continental Philosophy Review* 41, no. 3 (2008): 335.

which is necessarily non-identical with the latent demos, initiates closure and creates the initial condition for the later realization of constituent force.

This *paradox of constituent power* highlights the complex interplay between constituent and constituted types of force, and emphasizes that the former cannot come into existence without the latter's midwifery: "someone must seize the initiative to provide an initial determination of what interests join a group of individuals and who, at least implicitly belongs to the group. This initiative renders the 'leader' or 'leaders' the constituent power, and the collective a constituted power".²⁰⁰ The idea of the founding act as an act of non-democratic violence also reveals the symbolic dimension of constituent power, which is largely absent from Hardt's theory. For Hardt constituent power is primarily defined by the democratic multitude's ability to interrogate, destabilize, and play with sovereignty's absolute claims to power. By virtue of this capacity the multitude has always already emerged, while the moment of its foundation is obscured, and relegated to a non-event which belongs to an indeterminate past. Lindahl's legalism and his insistence on the necessary existence of a *nomos* breeds skepticism towards the narrative of constituent power's 'immaculate conception' and highlights the concept's deeply symbolic character: the ability to discursively constitute a society, and to symbolically articulate an internal-external division, becomes an integral part to the exercise of any constituent force.

Despite their differences in locating constituent power's referent object - for Hardt it can be found in democratic potentiality, whereas Lindahl favors juridical actuality - both agree on constituent power's ontological importance and its immanent state of existence. Lindahl notes: "human activity depends on a world that human beings do not create from nothing"²⁰¹, yet he also acknowledges such a world's continued reliance on the ontological productivity and dependent spontaneity of political agents, without which a concrete, conceivable reality couldn't come into existence.²⁰² This ability to make the world

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 336.

²⁰¹ Lindahl, "Possibility, Actuality, Rupture", 165.

²⁰² Ibid.

conceivable, understandable, and most importantly relatable cannot spring from a transcendent, i.e. divine or sovereign source, but must first and foremost reside in the immanent will to order and shape a deeply contradictory world without immediately binding characteristics.²⁰³ The ability to shape the world, and the sheer necessity to do so, positions constituent power as an ethico-political phenomenon, and as the clearest manifestation of freedom as autonomy.²⁰⁴

Kalyvas ties constituent power to the exercise of republican agency (similar to Hardt) and identifies the democratic multitude as the genuinely sovereign, constituent subject.²⁰⁵ This democratic reading of constituent power overlaps strongly with the ethico-political dimension previously discussed in the work of Lindahl, for whom constituent forces serve as distinct expressions of freedom. Self-legislation as the public event of self-alteration, in which the authors of laws become their addressees, feeds into a republican type of positive freedom and accounts of political autonomy.²⁰⁶

Where Hardt and Kalyvas differ is on their respective takes on sovereignty. Hardt favors a strongly dichotomous interpretation in which a constituent force, namely the productive democratic multitude, is pitted against a constituted power, represented by an inhibiting, coercive sovereign. In conclusion he diagnoses the functional and ethical incompatibility of the two concepts. Hardt's interpretation of sovereignty reinforces a popular assumption in political theory according to which accounts of sovereignty are widely irreconcilable with democratic traits - an assumption which makes Hardt complicit to a reductionist reading of sovereignty as a passage of pure control and command.²⁰⁷ This interpretation either identifies sovereignty and democracy as distinctively separate entities, or it permits the existence of democratic action only within Westphalian polities. Kalyvas exposes great distrust against such hierarchical interpretations

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Andreas Kalyvas, "Constituent Power", *Political Concepts* 3.2 (2014): 1.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 2.

and renders privileged readings, in which either democracy or sovereignty assume primacy over one another, as conceptually unwarranted. Instead he points towards the possibility of arriving at a co-articulation of sovereign and public wills.²⁰⁸ This is not an exceptional move, but rather represents a hitherto neglected strand in modern political thought, according to which political modernity can “be viewed as constituting of two forms of sovereign power and two visions of politics: the democratic and the monarchical, the constitutional and the absolutist, the federalist and the statist, the power of the Many to constitute versus the power of the One to command”.²⁰⁹ What Kalyvas suggests is the possible existence of sovereign political action outside of a Westphalian context, one simultaneously carried by a democratic rationale: sovereignty turns from the power to command into the power to constitute.²¹⁰ Interpreting sovereignty through the lens of constituent power destabilizes its prevalent interpretation as a coercive property, and it frees democratic action from its Westphalian straightjacket. Eventually it becomes possible to conceive of genuinely sovereign politics, which are embedded within a set of democratic practices, while existing simultaneously beyond a statist horizon.

Kalyvas adopts a decidedly formal and juridical perspective and defines the sovereign “as the one who determines the constitutional form, the juridical and political identity, and the governmental structure of the community in its entirety”.²¹¹ The exercise of constituent power is then not only superior to ordinary legislation²¹², but must also lead to concretely visible institutional effects and depends, once more, on the existence of a *nomos* within which constituent force can be wielded. Similar to Lindahl Kalyvas also identifies a paradox at the heart of the constituent process. The supposed non-relation between constituent and constituted power is then not as cut and dry as depicted by Hardt, but rests

²⁰⁸ Andreas Kalyvas, “Hegemonic sovereignty: Carl Schmitt, Antonio Gramsci and the constituent prince”, *Journal of Political Ideologies* 5, no. 3 (2000): 362.

²⁰⁹ Kalyvas, “Constituent Power”, 2.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

²¹¹ Andreas Kalyvas, “Popular Sovereignty, Democracy, and the Constituent Power”, *Constellations* 1, no. 2 (2005): 225.

²¹² Kalyvas, “Constituent Power”, 4.

instead on a mode of co-dependency and co-constitution. The specific problem identified by Kalyvas addresses law's *actuality* in relation to its *potentiality*, and sheds light on the fact that although constituent power "is outside established law, it is nevertheless of the law".²¹³ This diagnosis reveals the ambiguous relation between constituent power and the legal context which it creates: constituent power must, on the one side, reside outside of the very context it changes and cannot be bound by pre-existing norms (otherwise it would be constituent power). Yet, it must still remain attached to, and exist within, this particular political sphere in order to retain its transformative momentum. Such a complex intertwinement leads to the puzzling constellation in which constituent power must be regarded as an *autonomous dependency*: its actions aren't subject to any pre-given laws (hence it is autonomous), whereas its status as the potentially omnipotent law-giver remains strongly dependent on the recognition by the very political community destined for transformation. Constituent power must hence transform the source of its own emergence, while never being able to break free entirely.

3. Constituent power and the question of agency

The preceding section has demonstrated the capillary nature of the debates surrounding constituent power in (international) political theory, and it has introduced a number of relevant key-terms and concepts central to the current discourse. This sub-section departs from the previous findings and pays particular attention to questions of agency in the context of constituent power. Whilst the previous paragraphs have focused primarily on the nature of constituent power, the following pages attend to the question how constituent power is mobilized, by whom, by what means, and towards what end. For that purpose the section discusses two somewhat heterogenous takes on constituent agency, namely Hardt and Negri's neo-marxist multitude, with its focus on biopolitical production and living labor, *vis a vis* Schmitt's statist sovereign, an

²¹³ Kalyvas, "Popular Sovereignty, Democracy, and the Constituent Power", 234.

agency that wields constituent power through decisionist and exceptionalist practices.

3.1 Multitude and living labour

Hardt and Negri suggest a mobilization of constituent power through the figure of the *multitude*, a biopolitical agency which generates its own, immanent act-capacity from its ability to function as a force of living labour. Multitude counts as a decidedly modern phenomenon due to its emergence in the context of immanent Enlightenment politics, and its post-structural, network-like appearance. The special, and somewhat elevated status of multitude, stems from its involvement in immaterial production: whilst industrial labor is confined to the creation of material goods - cars, televisions, clothing, food, and the likes - immaterial production encompasses the constitution of social life.²¹⁴ Within the post-industrial paradigm of immaterial production labor “tends to produce the means of interaction, communication, and cooperation for production directly”.²¹⁵ Immaterial labour mobilizes non-material means of production and focuses primarily on the affective aspects of work: the manipulation of language, the stimulation of affects, analyzing and solving problems, or the creation of new symbols is the core business of affective labor - in short: the biopolitical production of all aspects of society.²¹⁶

Within the context of immaterial production multitude emerges as an agency capable of wielding constituent power due to its ability to produce ‘the common’. Similar to the notions of constituent power discussed in the previous section, multitude possesses the ability to create novel socio-political contexts while synchronously being able to withdraw from its very own creation when it feels the need to reshape it. In its most basic sense the common appears as the multiple, intertwining, and criss-crossing sets of relations of modern, global life.

²¹⁴ Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Multitude - War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), xvi.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

The common symbolizes the affective tissue which permeates contemporary mass societies and prevents them from disintegration. In addition it serves as an enabling force, fostering the emergence of complex modes of interdependence, i.e. the division of material labor or communication across previously locked societal contexts. The common is produced in an “expanding spiral relationship”²¹⁷ and not limited to a specific field of social or political activity. Instead it produces frameworks, norms, and symbolic orderings, and works outside and across traditional economic, political, social, or cultural compartments.²¹⁸

Against the backdrop of immaterial labor and the production of the common a rhizomatic, de-centered manifestation of constituent agency begins to surface. Kalyvas and Lindahl have repeatedly stressed the necessary existence of an agentic center of some kind, which needs to serve as the crystallization-point of any constituent force. Devoid of such a juridical or political hub constituent power remains incapacitated. Hardt and Negri’s multitude resists such centralizing tendencies and “can never be reduced to a unity or single identity”.²¹⁹ The multitude’s ability to wield constituent power hinges on its capacity to process individualized, divergent, intersecting, and heterogenous accounts of knowledge and information, and to transform them into ‘common knowledge’.²²⁰

Whilst transcendental models of constituent power depend on a sovereign center that imposes order on society from the outside, the forces sustaining the multitude are purely immanent and allow for the biopolitical organization of society from within.²²¹ Even without a governing center multitude still retains its agentic capacity and can arrive at decisions: it produces *the common in common* and “is not only a model for political decision-making but also tends itself to become political decision making”.²²² Multitude’s collaborative character gears

²¹⁷ Ibid., xv.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid., xiv.

²²⁰ Ibid., xv.

²²¹ Ibid., 337.

²²² Ibid., 338 f.

constituent power towards a decidedly democratic edge by means of ensuring that constituent force wielded within the multitude's context can create the pretext for genuinely democratic relationships.²²³ It then appears not only as a machinery for the immaterial production of the common, but also as a genuinely political apparatus for the provision of democratic goods by means of initiating the passage "from *Res-publica* to *Res-communis*".²²⁴ Labour and the immaterial (re-) production of multitude through the public turns into a decidedly democratic performance.²²⁵

Yet, political modernity is not only defined by the emergence of immanent democratic momenta, but is also characterized by omnipresent and recurring attempts to capture these forces through the deployment of transcendental and representational political mechanisms. This logic of modernity, namely the synchronous liberation and incarceration of republican force, attempts to downplay and control the role of non-representational agency in global affairs and prevents immanent power from unfolding its full democratic potential.²²⁶ Multitude stands for the immanent properties of constituent power, whereas its opponent, empire, represents the inhibiting and controlling mechanisms of constituted force. Multitude and empire are in no way capable of superseding the dialectic struggle between constituent and constituted power, and keep fighting it on a post-structural terrain: what changes are the means of engagement, not the operational logic of the confrontation as such. In the post-modern setting *constituent* power is then represented by forms of immanent *biopolitical* production and creates relationships and collaborative forms of labor, while *constituted* power gets mobilized in the context of *biopower*, which stands above society, and tries to impose order through channels of imperial authority.²²⁷

²²³ Ibid., xvi.

²²⁴ Ibid., 206.

²²⁵ Ibid., 206.

²²⁶ Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 70-74.

²²⁷ Hardt & Negri, *Multitude*, 94 f.

3.2 Sovereignty, decisionism, and the state

Whilst Hardt and Negri locate the source for constituent agency in the figure of a rhizomatic and network-like multitude, it is Schmitt who pitches the state as the principle agent behind constituent force. Schmitt's take on constituent power emerges through an engagement with exceptionalism and works across the strained relation between politics and law. In this context he famously proclaims: the "sovereign is he who decides on the exception"²²⁸ - genuine sovereign agency hence occupies the fringe lines of politics, the zone of indeterminacy and political action, impossible to associate with standardized procedure and routine. The ability to decide on the exception confers a status of unlimited authority and allows for a suspension of pre-established, legal orders. Real sovereignty affirms the superiority of the political over the juridical, and positions the state as the principal agent: "In such a situation it is clear that the state remains, whereas law recedes".²²⁹ The state and law aren't identical - in fact, the first can exist devoid of the latter. With this move Schmitt degrades law to an afterthought of statism, to a subordinate mechanism, governing routine, and remaining qualitatively inferior in the face of the actual sovereign. This very distinction points towards a strong hierarchical division between constituted (juridical) and constituent (statist) agency, and it establishes the critical moment of ultimate constituent power through the actions of an unbridled sovereign force. The decision realizes and initiates this demarcation and invokes the figure of an omnipotent lawgiver who decides autonomously on the margins of what is considered as 'normal'.

This interpretation of exceptionalist agency represents more than the embodiment of blunt power politics. Read through the lens of constituent power the decision and the exception reaffirm the autonomous quality of genuine political action, which mounts resistance against its subjugation to pre-given norms or rules. *Auctoritas, non veritas facit legem*²³⁰ appears as both, a warning and a

²²⁸ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology - Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 5.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

promise: the foundation of any given political and social order, of what is perceived as the 'present' and regarded as 'normal', is underpinned by latently violent founding acts (c.f. Lindahl for an in-depth discussion). Yet, the decision on the exception also stands for a moment of heightened, extraordinary creativity and mobilizes decisionist violence for the purpose of creating the 'new present', the 'new normal'.²³¹ It is Nietzsche who perfectly captures this destructive creativity inherent to constituent power in the *Genealogy of Morality*:

*Such beings cannot be reckoned with, they come like fate, without cause, reason, consideration or pretext, they appear just like lightning appears, too terrible, sudden, convincing and 'other' even to be hated. What they do is to create and imprint forms instinctively, they are the most involuntary, unconscious artists there are: (...) They do not know what guilt, responsibility, consideration are, these born organizers; they are ruled by that terrible inner artist's egoism which has a brazen countenance and sees itself justified to all eternity by the 'work', like the mother in her child.*²³²

Such a take on constituent power is quite different from Hardt and Negri's model of biopolitical agency. Multitude defines the 'normal' and shapes the common through efforts of immaterial labor. Schmitt's sovereign, however, decides on the separation of the common in accordance to its will. Multitude *creates without imposition* and is capable of accommodating multiple heterogenous subject-positions. The sovereign *creates through imposition* and knows only itself as the exclusive center of constituent agency. Despite their contrasting appearances both, multitude and the state, assume the status of ontologically productive forces. Schmitt's decisionist agent is *ontologically distinct* from the remainder of societal actors due to its capacity to act outside of established moral, aesthetic, or economic contexts. The sovereign assumes, furthermore, an *ontologically productive* status through its structuring effects on society. In the same way the multitude 'produces' the common through immaterial labor, the state 'produces' society through constituent efforts of symbolic ordering (c.f. Lindahl), for example by

²³¹ Ibid., 13.

²³² Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 58.

means of invoking the most intense of all decisions, the one on the political and the friend-enemy-distinction.²³³

Hardt and Negri's constituent agency is capable of existing devoid of a governing center, a feature that can't be applied to Schmitt's sovereign. In his case constituent power must know a center in order to be mobilized properly. This conclusion stems from the intimate intertwinement of constituent force and exceptionalist/decisionist thought. The privilege to decide on the exception appears as a personalized and charismatic form of rule in the Weberian sense, and can be traced back to a secularized image of a divine, omnipotent lawgiver.²³⁴ Political modernity disposed of god and puts the sovereign state in its place, but it also retained a sense of necessity for the existence of a superior, authoritative political force.²³⁵ Schmitt then ties the existence of constituent power closely to decisionist and exceptionalist forms of governance, and links these practices in a second step firmly to the state. The state, however, requires separateness in the form of organized people and discrete territorial spaces²³⁶, which leads to the inevitable conclusion that constituent agency can only be materialized in closed political contexts. Schmitt notes that "the exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology"²³⁷, a statement which immediately prevents any immanent (i.e. biopolitical) interpretation of constituent power, and relegates constituent agency into the realm of the transcendental.

4. Constituent power and the anarchist tradition of political thought

The previous section provided a survey of the debates surrounding constituent power and constituent agency in (international) political theory. Despite their heterogeneity there exists a general consensus across the assessed approaches, according to which constituent power must always appear in the form of a founding force, capable of defining the ontological ordering of a given

²³³ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 26.

²³⁴ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 33.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

²³⁶ Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 19.

²³⁷ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 36.

or emerging political community. Disagreement persists in terms of constituent power's location and agency. In this respect two camps have emerged from the debate: a communitarian or statist branch, represented by Schmitt and Lindahl, and a post-structural and revolutionary wing, headed by Hardt, Negri, and Kalyvas. The former emphasizes that constituent power can only be wielded properly within the confinements of a closed community, and by the hands of a centralized ordering force. The latter, however, sheds light on pluralist and decentralized moments of constituent force.

Yet, one of the most remarkable features about the current debate is a general lack of global accounts of constituent power. Only Hardt and Negri's multitude makes an attempt to highlight the relevancy of constituent power in the context of international and transnational politics. Yet, multitude suffers from a series of defects rife to be addressed and remedied (see chapter VII for an in-depth discussion).²³⁸ Among other issues multitude is criticized for its elitist approach to revolution, which privileges immaterial work over other forms of productive activity, and assigns revolutionary potential exclusively to a specialized class of highly skilled, affective laborers. The following chapters aim at developing a much-needed alternative to such prevalent forms of constituent power in international affairs, and argue in favor of a closer engagement with Proudhon's anarchist political thought. It is problematic, however, that Proudhon never explicitly used the concept of constituent power in his own work, which makes it necessary to read his political philosophy through a constituent lens prior to its deployment into global politics. Hence it is the aim of the final section of this chapter to engage with a number of Proudhon's key-concepts (through a closer reading of his key-writings) and explain to what extent conceptions of constituent power resonate through them.

²³⁸ Paul Thompson, "Foundation and Empire: A critique of Hardt and Negri", *Capital & Class* 29 (2005): 73 ff.; and David Camfield, "The Multitude and the Kangaroo: A Critique of Hardt and Negri's Theory of Immaterial Labor", *Historical Materialism* 15, no. 2 (2007): 21 ff.

4.1 Mutualist politics: Justice in the Revolution and the Church

The core argument of Proudhon's anarchist philosophy is developed in the 1858 magnum opus *Justice in the Revolution and the Church*. *Justice* needs to be understood as a conceptual key-document and positions itself at the center of mutualist anarchist thought. It develops an immanent approach to revolutionary philosophy, and pits itself against the absolutist ideological claims of the church and the state. In that regard *Justice* is working alongside clearly defined lines, and distinguishes sharply between absolutist and revolutionary forms of political conduct - this division takes place against the backdrop of a struggle between authoritarian (constituted) and anarchist (constituent) political practices. *Justice* strives towards cultivating an immanent account of human conduct by means of opposing transcendental and representational ethical schemes.

Despite its decidedly anti-foundational approach towards politics and ethics, *Justice* still relies on a series of ontological core-assumptions about human nature and societal development. Man is perceived as being driven by two diverging traits: egoism and sociability. Humans are portrayed as “egoistic by nature, rightful egoists, capable of great sacrifices, but opposed to subjugation”.²³⁹ Yet, they're equally “social animals (...) unable to advance and evolve other than within the confinements of society”.²⁴⁰ This unresolvable antagonism positions natural egoism and social rationality in opposition to one another²⁴¹, and requires certain accounts of ‘justice’ in order to be managed and coordinated properly. Justice is then first and foremost a purely instrumental, value-free, and regulative mechanism. It coordinates society's diverging forces and can be realized in two different ways: *first*, through imposition, in which case justice, as an external property, assumes power over the individual. Society, the

²³⁹ Proudhon, *Die Gerechtigkeit in der Revolution und in der Kirche. Neue Principien praktischer Philosophie*, I-63 - translation: “Der Mensch ist frei, ein Egoist von Natur, ich möchte sogar sagen, rechtmäßiger Egoist, sehr fähig sich aus Liebe und aus Freundschaft aufzuopfern, aber rebellisch gegen den Zwang”.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., I-65 - translation: “Der Mensch ist ein geselliges Thier, das geselligste unter allen Thieren. Er kann sich nicht anders entwickeln, nicht anders leben als in Gesellschaft”.

²⁴¹ Ibid., I-69 - translation: “(...) Gesetz seiner Natur, das des Egoismus (...)” vs. “(...) sozialen Vernunftpflicht (...)”.

collective being, then shapes the individual agent in accordance to its needs.²⁴² Or, alternatively, through immanent processes of mutual recognition. This *second* approach to human emancipation serves as the backbone of mutualist anarchism. Emancipatory justice can only be realized in cases where political agents have the opportunity to sense and experience their own personhood in and through others: “Justice, I must repeat, is to sense our *ownness* through *the other*”.²⁴³ This reciprocal account of justice requires that humans strive actively towards socio-political conditions under which they can retain their own individuality, while simultaneously encountering themselves through *the other’s* dignity.

The rejection of the first, obtruded type of justice takes place on the grounds of a general refutation of transcendental and representational modes of ethical conduct, and can also be interpreted as a critique of constituted power. The main target of this critique is religion in general, and the church in particular. Both count as agents that wield authority in an attempt to construct and maintain ethical systems whose originating source is relegated towards an in-transparent, divine, transcendental realm.²⁴⁴ Divine law then counts as a prime example of constituted power, since humans are subjected to the word of god and the teachings of the church. Religious authorities command an otherwise subordinate mass, whereas the ability to constitute is the privilege of a distant divine presence and its earthly representatives. Humans have little say in the appearance of god-given law, which presents itself as an absolute and coherent truth awaiting realization, not questioning, change, or transformation. Transcendental ethics as a form of constituted power assume the general inability of human agents to make their own history.²⁴⁵ Furthermore, they are preventing immanent ethics from emerging, since all potentially productive human encounters are filtered through a set of *a priori* established sacred norms.

²⁴² Ibid., I-74 f.

²⁴³ Ibid., I-183.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., I-76 ff. & I-87.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., I-187.

Against the ethical prescriptions of ‘the absolute’ the system of ‘revolution’ is fielded - a principle of ethical immanence based on the constituent elements of human agency.²⁴⁶ Authority and ‘the absolute’ deliberately circumnavigate non-transcendental normative agency, and deactivate immanent constituent capacities through modes of representation. ‘Revolution’, however, discerns justice as an entirely political product whose existence depends on intersubjective processes of co-constitution. Justice reveals itself as a faculty of the mind and of human consciousness. It displaces god as the ultimate authority capable of telling good from evil, and puts political agents in its place instead.²⁴⁷ Individuals, through their mutual relations towards one another, give rise to their own accounts of justice. Only through such unmediated and immanently productive processes is it possible to experience one’s dignity and personhood through the dignity and personhood of ‘the other’. *Justice* hence develops a contract theory in strictly practical, or rather processual, sense: instead of arranging the contact points between individuals and society through a social contract that is later removed from the demos and governs it from above, immanent accounts of justice rely on an ongoing, open-ended process of negotiation whose dynamics cannot be limited by pre-established moral, political, social, or cultural standards.²⁴⁸ A conscious political agent will always prefer immanent accounts of justice over transcendental ones, mainly due to an inherently egoistic motivation: if I can experience my own dignity only through reciprocal encounters with others, and if systems of representation are not conducive to this endeavor, it is in my own (read: best, egoistic, rational) interest to cultivate immanent systems of justice, for the purpose of removing transcendental barriers, and foster unmediated social encounters instead.²⁴⁹

In order to realize immanent justice society must hence overcome the system of the absolute (transcendence and representation; authority and

²⁴⁶ Ibid. I-83 ff. & I-88.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., I-88.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., I-187.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., I-189 & I-191 ff.

constituted power) and replace it with a revolutionary mode of being. Revolution amounts to more than a mere event and needs to be understood as a novel way of living, of relating, to one another. It breaks the straight-jacket of providence and fatalism, and puts representational and transcendental authority-structures - i.e. economic classes, hegemonic ideologies, or the reason of the state - into question.²⁵⁰ The agentic force behind such a transformation is society itself, since the revolutionary principle necessarily amounts to strictly immanent processes. The revolutionary mode of existence is also a clear manifestation of constituent power, since it affirms the generative potential inherent to the demos, and assigns the power to create, sustain, and transform political realities to society itself - not to god, the state, or the church. Eventually there exist two concrete and complementary manifestations of constituent power through which the desired transformation can be achieved: *collective force*, a material aspect²⁵¹, and *collective reason*, an ideational one.²⁵² The purpose of mobilizing constituent power jointly through collective force and collective reason is to arrive at a new form of freedom, one that doesn't present itself as a fixed, immutable end. Instead, freedom is decidedly republican in nature and revealed as the capacity to act in concert with others for the purpose of collectively shaping the conditions of communal existence: "Freedom is a force that emerges out of the synthesis of diverging human abilities"²⁵³, and it can only be found in the pure manifestation of constituent power.

4.2 Collective reason: Political Capacity of the Working Class

Political Capacity of the Working Class presents the theme of constituent power through an engagement with 'collective reason', and works again across the previously addressed division between absolute and revolution. *Political Capacity* mobilizes constituent forces towards a very particular end and highlights their

²⁵⁰ Ibid., I-519.

²⁵¹ Ibid., I-522 ff.

²⁵² Ibid., II-406 ff.

²⁵³ Ibid., II-563 - translation: "Die Freiheit ist die Macht, die sich aus der Synthese oder Collectivität der menschlichen Fähigkeiten ergibt".

generative momenta in a particularly revolutionary sense. The aim of all political struggles must amount to the weakening and eventual dissolution of centralized, i.e. statist, structures ('the absolute') for the purpose of initiating the realization of a multi-layered and heterogenous network-society with strong institutional groundings in the mutualistic principle.²⁵⁴ The practice of mutualism as the organizational pinnacle of political activity represents an institutionalization of the two antagonistic principles 'sociability' and 'egoism', which were previously discussed in the assessment of *Justice*. A mutualistic society won't make any messianic attempts to mend its members behavior in an effort to better them, but will instead institutionalize the perpetual possibility of conflict that stems from the occurrence of individual egoism. These potentially destructive traits will, however, be backed and hedged with accounts of guarantees and reciprocity.²⁵⁵

Centralized political structures are incapable of realizing such objectives because they only cater to their own needs. The intended transformation towards mutualistic social arrangements is hence only possible through collective and immanent acts of social transformation.²⁵⁶ *Political Capacity of the Working Class* picks upon on the topic of socio-political change and discusses the practical conditions for reform by means of mobilizing the constituent and transformative momentum of collective ideas.²⁵⁷ While another one of Proudhon's major works, *What is Property*, highlights constituent power's material side, namely the material conditions that underpin the deployment of constituent power, *Political Capacity* focus instead on the ideational preconditions for realizing emancipatory change. *Political Capacity* works almost like a manual, and alludes to the question how social groupings and entire populations may be able to realize their immanent, transformative potential, through an affirmation of their constituent force.²⁵⁸ In that respect it is deemed necessary for them to develop an *idée ouvrière*, a joint self-

²⁵⁴ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Von der Befähigung arbeitender Menschen zur Politik*, trans. Lutz Roemheld (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2008), VII.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, XV.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, XVI-XVII.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 98.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

awareness in the form of collective reason. Similar to humans, which need to recognize themselves through others in order to realize their full potential as political actors, groups need to conceive of themselves as political forces if they are planning to realize their revolutionary capabilities.²⁵⁹

The collective exercise of constituent power, and the subsequent realization of mutualistic practices, is supposed to initiate structural political change on at least two interconnected levels. From a distributive perspective mutualism is destined to reform the allocation of economic gains and decrease - through principles of fairness and reciprocity - the occurrence of social inequality and injustice. Mutualism has, furthermore, an explicitly ethical dimension to it and is also expected to account for the widespread politicization of society, in an attempt to reform an otherwise passive and politically disengaged demos.²⁶⁰ The desired rise of mutualistic structures through the development of an *idée ouvrière* asks then for a far-reaching mobilization of constituent power. The order of the absolute - patterns of hierarchy and coercion - is supposed to be replaced by a revolutionary, mutualistic federation, in which politically matured agents realize and regularly practice the demos capacity for self-alteration. Exercising constituent power in such critical moments of self-alteration and self-generation is then necessarily a public and immanent event (through the creation of a collective reason) and cannot be captured through instances of transcendental, political representation.²⁶¹ Hitherto passive individuals are encouraged to take political matters into their own hands and to realize their republican potential as active citizens. Proudhon notes that all social arrangements that exist prior to the arrival of collective, constituent agency are characterized by their attempt to prohibit, deny, and obstruct. However, after successfully transitioning into a mutualistic social state, institutions such as law will be transformed in their meaning and assume an enabling and guaranteeing character, since the constituted

²⁵⁹ Ibid., XIV, 50, & 55 ff.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., XIX.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 79.

power they hold over society has been sized by immanent, constituent forces.²⁶² Proudhon's prophecy about the changing nature of law - from punitive to facilitative - sounds quite similar to Agamben's take on a post-judicial world in which "one day humanity will play with law just as children play with disused objects, not in order to restore their canonical use but to free them from it for good".²⁶³ The insistence on the possibility to exercise constituent power through the mobilization of collective reason makes an important contribution to the contemporary debate on constituent agency. Certain authors, i.e. Lindahl, but also Schmitt, willingly acknowledge the demos generative potential, but deny its eventual ability to act in a productive fashion. The exercise of constituent power requires, according to them, an act of violence in which the power exalted by 'the many' is monopolized by 'the few' and directed into a specific direction. In this particular moment the multitude becomes an agent of sovereign command, and falls victim to exercises of constituted power. The vehicle of collective reason resists such claims and demonstrates instead a democratic multitude's status as a founding-force, capable to successfully marshal concrete, political act-capacity.

4.3 Collective force: What is Property?

What is Property approaches the theme of constituent power not in a strictly political manner, unlike later works such as *Justice in the Revolution and the Church* or *The Political Capacity of the Working Class*. The matter driving *What is Property?* is not so much the question how constituent forces can be mobilized for political ends, but rather how (1) the demos constituent capacity - the founding power of the working class to be more specific - resonates in collective acts of labor; (2) how these joint efforts create economic value; and (3) how certain societal institutions - most notably property - lead to an appropriation of constituent power through a class of proprietors (agents of constituted power). *What is Property* offers a decidedly economic take on constituent power, which presents itself as the collective forces that underpin and sustain labor processes.

²⁶² Ibid., 219.

²⁶³ Agamben, *State of Exception*, 64.

A main emphasis is put on the collective and generative aspects of labor, and how the joint efforts of economic groups and classes produce, in common, the materiality of modern life.

Whereas *collective reason* was labeled as a deliberate and summoned product of joint political action, employed by a demos or a multitude for the purpose of creating a collective consciousness, *collective force* is always already, hence latently, present. Modern life as such is underpinned, made possible, and sustained by operations which mobilize constituent power, and produce the common through collective efforts of labor: “The fallacy in this argument lies in the false supposition, that each producer is not necessarily association with every other producer”.²⁶⁴ And further: “With the exception of the proprietor, we labor for each other; we can do nothing by ourselves unaided by others, and we continually exchange products and services with each other. If these are not social acts, what are they?”.²⁶⁵ A series of ethical questions is raised in this particular context. While later works such as the previously discussed *Political Capacity of the Working Class* engage with the question how the producing fraction of society might mobilize collective reason for their political ends, *What is Property* concerns itself primarily with questions of how the products of collective force - excess- or surplus-value - can be retained within the locus of their own production. The argumentative linchpin in that regard revolves around the matter of capitalist wage labor and how monetary compensation fails to properly reflect the surplus-value created through conjointly arranged collective forces: “The price is not sufficient: the labor of the workers has created a value; now value is their property. But they have neither sold nor exchanged it; and you, capitalist, you have not earned it”.²⁶⁶ Collective force hence produces value, but this value is often captured and appropriated in places and by agents who haven’t been involved in its initial generation.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Proudhon, *What is Property*, 226.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 227.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 133.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.

What is Property undertakes an extensive and directed effort to debunk the myth of property. Property serves as the main target of the critique, due to the institution's centrality to capitalist efforts of appropriating surplus-value (and of collective force and constituent power). Property in that regard operates as a phenomenon of constituted power due to its function as a disciplinary tool. As such it is part of a larger effort to control and command the productive forces of society, and make them extractable to the formalized and legalized modes of capitalist production. The appropriation of collective force through capitalist-legalist efforts leads into a hierarchical relationship between proprietor and possessor, which gets entrenched through the institutions of private property and wage-labor. *What is Property* works through a variety of founding myths, interrogates them, and offers explanations to why the institution of property must be viewed as a myth, charged with malice, and employed by the bourgeoisie and the property- and land-owning class to deprive the agents of constituent power of the results of their collective efforts.²⁶⁸ What shimmers through the discussion is a theme that only comes to full fruition 18 years later in *Justice's* diagnosis about the ongoing tension between absolutist and revolutionary forms of governance. What unites property as a social institution with monarchic or aristocratic forms of governance, and what makes them both complicit to constituted forms of power, is their shared, static understanding of ownership and politics: "The proprietor, the robber, the hero, the sovereign - for all these titles are synonymous - imposes his will as law, and suffers neither contradiction nor control; that is, he pretends to be the legislative and executive power at once".²⁶⁹ The main target of *What is Property's* critique is 'pure' or 'naked' property, namely property in the tradition of Roman law as an absolute domain (*jus in re*): a proprietors right to use and abuse, apart from and in separation to, the social context in which value was initially produced.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 82 ff.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 263.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 78.

What is Property advocates instead for a revolutionary (or rather democratic) definition of ownership, in which property is abolished and replaced by a right to use. The underlying argument leads away from pure property and towards possession (*jus ad rem*), and it highlights the possibility of ownership in a relational and contextualized sense - one that does justice to the products of collective force and joint efforts of labor.²⁷¹ The concept of property (a monarchical and aristocratic principle) separates the usage of a resource from its control, but possession amalgamates both elements in a democratic sense. Those who use a resource on a regular basis acquire the right to control it: “Possession is a blessing, but property is robbery”.²⁷² This approach to collective force shows great similarities with the strategy concerning collective reason and the way it is developed in *Political Capacity of the Working Class*. Both writings argue for the mobilization of collective force and collective reason by revolutionary means and for the purpose of freeing the productiveness of constituent power from its constituted, absolutist, and anti-democratic constraints. *What is Property* mounts not only a strong critique against liberal and capitalist monopolizations of property, but leashes out against communism as well.²⁷³ Making property common and a part of the state-apparatus will only aide the perseverance of fixed and immutable property-titles, while perpetuating the appropriation of constituent power through the centralizing forces of constituted power. Communism in that regard only leads to a transfer of ownership-titles from individual to common ownership, and leaves the anti-democratic principle of property intact.

4.4 Revolutionary ontologies: The Philosophy of Progress

The preceding discussion on the role of constituent power in the context of Proudhon’s anarchist philosophy has mainly been touching on practical questions, and issues of how constituent power can be turned into agency

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid., 361.

²⁷³ Ibid., 248 ff.

through the employment of collective force and reason. *Philosophy of Progress* is only partly concerned with the activist side of constituent force, and engages instead with questions on the ontological climate in which constituent power is able to flourish. Towards that end it develops conceptual parameters for a political theory in which ‘revolution’ and ‘progress’ are understood as ontological conditions required for the exercise of genuine political action: ‘progress’ denotes a state, a condition, of contingency and indeterminacy, and serves as the pretext for constituent social activities. In the opening section of this chapter it was made clear that constituent power’s main marker of distinction comprises of being an unfettered, unfounded, and spontaneous force. Constituent power was not only regarded as productive in the sense of possessing the potentially to create novel social and political arrangements. It was also depicted as ‘exceptional’ due to its ability of creating contexts, while at the very same time retreating from them. The precondition for constituent power’s ability to perform such tasks is the existence of an ontological void which offers space for the enactment of *begründende Gewalt*, of founding power. The absence of such a void, i.e. the existence of a supposedly permanent, non-negotiable context, would incapacitate constituent force and turn it into constituted power by means of making it subject to pre-given rules and regulations. Constituent power would then be bound by certain ontological preconditions (i.e. Hegel’s teleological concept of history), which would preempt the possibility of acting in a genuinely constituent fashion. The existence of an almost nihilistic ontological void is then a necessary requirement for the projection of constitutive force. *The Philosophy of Progress* charts this ontological terrain and defines ontological anti-essentialism as the pre-text for the exercise of constituent power.

The developed argument works along the lines of two opposing philosophical traditions, one of which subscribes to ‘the absolute’, the other to ‘progress’ – this binary distinction is in fact very similar to the overarching theme of *Justice in the Revolution and the Church*. Against this backdrop one must understand *Philosophy of Progress* as a manifesto in favor of an anti-essentialist, non-foundational, and process-based ontology which seeks to demonstrate the

implausibility and undesirability of substantialist assertions. The bedrock assumption driving this philosophical manifesto is the commitment towards an ontological dynamism termed ‘movement’ or ‘progress’. The realm of authority and constituted power - i.e. the state, social-contract-theories, ideological absolutes, etc. – attempt to foreclose movement:

*The Absolute, or absolutism, is, on the contrary the affirmation of all that Progress denies, the negation of all that it affirms. It is the study, in nature, society, religion, politics, morals, etc., of the eternal, the immutable, the perfect, the definitive, the unconvertible, the undivided; it is, to use a phrase made famous in our parliamentary debates, in all and everywhere the status quo.*²⁷⁴

Progress, on the other side, preserves movement through its firm commitment to constituent power:

*Progress, once more, is the affirmation of universal movement, consequently the negation of every immutable form and formula, of every doctrine of eternity, permanence, impeccability, etc. applied to any being whatever, it is the negation of every permanent order, even that of the universe, and of every subjection or objection, empirical or transcendental, which does not change.*²⁷⁵

Alongside this binary distinction between substantialism and anti-foundationalism *The Philosophy of Progress* advances a process-ontology which favors synthetic modes of being and interrogates monadic approaches to political theory (see chapter VI for an in-depth discussion). All of social life is synthetic and grouped²⁷⁶, but substantialist and monadic political theories are incapable of grasping the dynamism that underpins political activity. Instead they depart from the assumption of fixed categorizations in which ideologies, identities, modes of belonging, etc. are perceived of *as if* they had an unalterable substance, awaiting to be realized and enacted.²⁷⁷ Progress-centered theories on the other side accurately

²⁷⁴ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *The Philosophy of Progress*, trans. Shawn P. Wilbur & Jesse Cohn, ed. Left Liberty, The New Proudhon Library 20, no. 1 (2009), 12.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 23.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 27 f. & 30.

grasp the improvised and emerging nature of political existence, and they understand the modularity of communal life. In opposition to their substantialist counterparts they question essentialist assumptions and expose them as implausible reductions of complex, and sometimes indeterminate, political dynamics.²⁷⁸

Circling back to the topic of power it becomes apparent how these more abstract, ontological observations resonate in political practice. Substantialist ontological assumption lead to an affirmation of ‘absolutist’ politics and privilege accounts of constituted power. Primacy is given to the realization of a *telos*, a higher purpose, or an absolute truth, which results in the potential obstruction of social dynamism. “History is closed by constituent power or, rather, the history it determines is restricted to the continual repetition of the same social divisions and hierarchies”²⁷⁹, Hardt notes. The same holds true for substantialist political theories, due to the neglect of social dynamism in the wake of a commitment towards ontological givens. Anti-essentialist takes on ontology favour accounts of constituent power instead. Their focus on processes and the synthetic, grouped nature of communal life, makes them susceptible to the foundationlessness of political configurations and the centrality of constituent forces, which are required for facilitating the existence of any kind of social arrangement.

4.5 Constituted and constituent power in other works

The previously discussed core-themes of revolutionism, collective force, collective reason, and ontological progress provide for a framework through which other works by Proudhon can be read as well. What becomes visible is the continuous reappearance of different types of constituent force, and their ongoing struggle with constituted modes of power. *Confessions of a Revolutionary* diagnoses a general incompatibility between the people and government. Government is portrayed as an agent of constituted power – immobile, conservative, counter-revolutionary, incapable of initiative. The people, on the

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 18 ff.

²⁷⁹ Hardt, “Three Keys to Understanding Constituent Power”, vii-viii.

other side, represent a constituent force through their generally revolutionary leaning and their productiveness in the labor-process.²⁸⁰ The arrangement of societal forces hence follows two broad schemes: communal life can either be organized around a centralized, inhibiting, and hierarchical authority-structures, or, alternatively, affirm the principles of collective force by means of employing economic activity and labor as society's major form-giving doctrines.²⁸¹ *Confessions of a Revolutionary* exposes an overall strong, and sometimes uncritical, focus on the virtues of living labor, and advances a sweeping, general rejection of politics, in favor of productive, decentralized, and non-hierarchical economic activity. It also bears a decidedly functionalist imprint and suggests to reduce government to a purely administrative apparatus with the power to initiate, but not to execute.²⁸² Industrial activity – the product of collective force - is supposed to replace governmental activity and create multiple, independent centers of constituent power.²⁸³ The overall aim is to arrive at a type of democratic governance in which popular activity is exercised regularly through acts of labor which originates in multiple, heterogeneous locations.²⁸⁴

The General Idea of Revolution shares this strongly functionalist undertone, while declaring *societas* a fiction and *universitas* a social reality. When people gather they're usually grouped in and around economic activities, and refrain from associating beyond the immediately necessary.²⁸⁵ Collective force and constituent power can flourish best in functional arrangements such as cooperatives. More permanent configurations have the tendency to solidify and reproduce the habits of government and constituted force. Similar to *Confessions of a Revolutionary* one can find suggestions about the absorption of centralized authority-structures, i.e. significant parts of the state apparatus, into economic forms of societal

²⁸⁰ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, "Confessions of a Revolutionary", in *Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology*, ed. Ian McKay (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011), 398 ff.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 432.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 441.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 447.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 463.

²⁸⁵ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *General Idea of Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Corvus Editions, The New Proudhon Library, 10 (2010), 52.

organization.²⁸⁶ As part of this effort *The General Idea of Revolution* also suggests to foster a form of commutative justice through the advancement of a contractually governed communities. “The idea of contract excludes that of government”, Proudhon notes, and continues that “what characterizes the contract is agreement for equal exchange”.²⁸⁷ Members of permanent associations must surrender parts of their personal sovereignty for the purpose of becoming part of a group, whereas commutative and contractual justice is supposed to give rise to forms of ad-hoc associations in which the contracting parties retain their liberty and act-capacity.²⁸⁸ The theme of constituent and constituted power becomes visible again in the particular conflict between permanent associations and contractual arrangements. The former are labeled the despotic and dogmatic agents of unproductive, constituted power, but the latter ones are expected to foster constituent power through the unhampered development of collective forces.

The Principle of Federation sides with the previously introduced lines of reasoning to the extent that it divides the political landscape into orders founded upon either authority or liberty.²⁸⁹ Yet, while the foregoing discussion has suggested the possibility of pure political orders, i.e. fully developed democratic or anarchic regimes, *The Principle of Federation* arrives at a much more differentiated conclusion, and proposes the unresolvable and antinomic co-presence of liberty and authority.²⁹⁰ All political orders are consequently perceived of as blends of authoritarian (constituted power) and revolutionary elements (constituent power), which leads to the conclusion that the form of government is determined by the respective distribution of authority and liberty, and not by a definitive choice between the two principles.²⁹¹ This insight leads to the reluctant acceptance of the necessity of some degree of government. What is retained is *The General Idea of Revolution’s* affirmation of reducing government’s power to a bare minimum,

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 45.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 68.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 70.

²⁸⁹ Proudhon, *The Principle of Federation and the Need to Reconstitute the Party of Revolution*, 2.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 2.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 5.

such as providing guarantees, or devising frameworks for societal action. The system best capable of reducing constituted power's inhibitive influence, while fostering constituent power's productive capacity, is a federal arrangements based on synallagmatic and commutative contracts.²⁹² These contracts are designed to ensure that each political agent has "as much to receive from the state as he gives up" and keeps "all his liberty, his sovereignty and his initiative, minus what is related to the special objects from which the contracts is formed (...) for".²⁹³ The federal system is consciously built around the permanent mobilization of constituent power. Accounts of constituted power are deliberately curtailed through the limitation, separation, and diffusion of centralized authority structures, and the reduction of government to a mere federal authority.²⁹⁴ Constituent power, on the other side, can be exercised continuously in economic clusters through the mobilization of collective force and collective reason.

5. Conclusion: constituent anarchy

A directed reading of Proudhon's key-texts sheds light on the close proximity between one of anarchism's key-thinkers and the philosophical tradition of constituent power. Proudhon's heightened awareness for constituent political momenta has become apparent on several occasions, and resonates on an ontological (revolutionary ontology in *Philosophy of Progress*), a material (collective force in *What is Property?*), and an ideational level (collective reason in *Political Capacity of the Working Class*). The exercise of constituent power is in all cases and on all levels accompanied by the occurrence of an ontologically productive juncture, a founding-act of some sort, and instances of elevated creativity. Towards that end anarchist constituent force also alludes to the possibility of a political exceptionalism from below. The anarchist approach does not relegate, in opposition to Schmitt, the exercise of constituent power to the fringe-lines of

²⁹² Ibid., 694 f.

²⁹³ Ibid., 695.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 697.

politics (i.e. in the form of an ‘exception from above’).²⁹⁵ Rather than dividing the common arbitrarily through the exercise of a sovereign decision, anarchism highlights the occurrence of constituent power through acts of political and economic labour. Cultivating an elevated awareness for the possibility and existence of such an ‘exceptionalism from below’ also sheds light on the immanent nature of constituent anarchy. Statist or legalist takes on constituent force assign the performance of founding-acts to a transcendental source of authority. The anarchist approach points in the opposite direction and towards the necessarily immanent character of constituent power. The existence of an immanent, democratic exceptionalism multiplies the possible occurrence of political founding-acts, and removes them from the supposedly necessary existence of a sovereign center.

In relation to sovereignty anarchist constituent power highlights the importance and robustness of acts of self-legislation through the performance of democratic agency in the context of public events of self-alteration.²⁹⁶ The critical importance of such collectively driven, transformative acts lies in their ability to re-assess the basis for genuinely sovereign action. Sovereignty is not longer framed in a narrow, transcendental, and coercive Westphalian fashion, and reveals instead its decidedly democratic and republican edge. *Justice in the Revolution and the Church* alludes to the split nature of sovereign practices when it distinguishes between absolutist and revolutionary practices. Both modes of political activity fall under the heading of sovereign action. Yet, while ‘the absolute’ operates under a putative and inhibiting pretext, ‘revolution’ stands for a mode of republican performativity and a moment of *autopoiesis* in a genuinely anarchic context. The relation between constituted and constituent power is, however, not as clear cut as the simple binary division between absolute and revolution would suggest. *The Principle of Federation* grasps the mutually constitutive nature of constituted and constituent politics when it advocates in favour of an institutional scaffolding for labor, provided for by the state. Such an interpretation of the

²⁹⁵ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, xx.

²⁹⁶ Kalyvas, *Constituent Power*, 1.

interrelatedness of power brushes against the grain of Hardt and Negri's empire-multitude-binary, which diagnoses a general incompatibility between constituted and constituent types of force. The anarchist take on power sides instead with Kalyvas' interpretation, for whom the structuring presence of constituted force is tolerable as long as solidified power-structures remain accountable to, and transformable by, republican agencies.

Lastly it has also transpired that political agency and act-capacity in the context of anarchist constituent power bears strong imprints of 'groupness'. The power to maintain and significantly transform prevalent political orders has been assigned to collective entities and their ability to wield collective force and collective reason through their joint activities. Exercising constituent power depends indeed on the existence of a somewhat bound demos. Yet, since constituent force can be exercised through acts of political and economic labor, the borders of such groups can, and actually must, remain permeable. *Confessions of a Revolutionary*, *The General Idea of Revolution*, and *The Principle of Federation* reject firm and permanently bound associations in favour of contractually bound social arrangements, and point towards the necessarily porous nature of political groupings. Constituent anarchy is then exercised by overlapping and intertwining 'natural groups', whose efforts materialize either through economic or political labor. These groups exist in an environment populated by nested, semi-bound, and semi-detached units, which wield diverging amounts of constituent force.

CHAPTER FIVE

V | FROM POWER TO FORCE

1. Introduction: power in International Relations theory

The contextualized reading of Proudhon's political theory in the preceding chapter revealed the close relation between mutualist anarchist thought and constituent power. Chapter V will now come to a full circle and return back to the dominant theme of chapter II, namely the incomplete mobilization of productive force in IR-theory. This chapter engages once more with the theme of power in IR, and utilizes the insights gained in chapter IV. The main aim of this chapter is to see how the deployment of anarchist notions of power resonate with IR's power-discourse. After having completed the analysis the argument sets off to a re-evaluation of ontology and agency (ch. VI), sovereignty (ch. VII), and ethics (ch. VIII) along anarchist lines.

The argument developed in this chapter progresses in three consecutive steps: section *two* opens the complex by means of discussing three prevalent notions of power in IR, namely realism's hard-power or capability model, the poststructural take on power as an immanent property to discourses, and finally the hybrid-approach of 'soft power', which attempts to combine interest- and discourse-based foci of inquiry. Section *three* analyzes the diagnosed divide and

argues that IR's power-discourse operates within these specific silos due to a conceptual division along the lines of distributive and constitutive politics. The discrete alignment of materialist/capability-based models on the one side, and ideational/discursive notions of power on the other emerges through distinctively different epistemic approaches. Sections *four* and *five* provide, as already indicated above, an anarchist take on IR's power-discourse through the mobilization of Proudhon's concept of social force. This section discusses the theory of force against the backdrop of aggregated, agglomerated, cooperative, and commutative concepts of power, and offers a series of concluding thoughts as to why IR needs to be more open to the contributions of classical anarchist thought to its canon.

2. Capabilities, discourses, and the power of persuasion

The concept of power in IR-theory is characterized by its Janus-faced appearance. Power certainly counts as one of the key-terms central to the study of international political processes, and questions about its conceptual essence (*What does power mean?*), its relational qualities (*What does power do?*), its effect on the historical configuration of socio-political arrangements (*How and why did certain powerful actors develop historically in ways that allowed them to unfold significant amounts of influence?*), and last but not least its practical applicability (*How can power be mobilized towards certain political ends?*) deeply permeate the field. Yet conversely, and despite its centrality to the study of global politics, power resists any conclusive attempt of having its definitional meaning settled for good. The concept of power is essentially contested within IR, and for quite some time political realism has held a quasi-monopoly on its (preliminary) definition. With the emergence of poststructural IR theorizing in the 1980s this monopoly did certainly not break down. However, previously dominant materialist notions of power have been complemented by newly emerging ideational, relational, and discursive interpretations. The emerging divide has further contributed to a diversification of the IR-field and gave rise to a seemingly insurmountable divide between 'power as capability' versus 'power as discourse'.

Power in IR is then most commonly underpinned by a notion of capacity. Powerful actors have the ability to inflict decisive and lasting change on their socio-political surrounding. This active or positive account of being “able to make, or able to receive, any change”²⁹⁷ puts a special emphasis on potentiality, actuality, and the realization of will. It brings with it the condition that power is closely connected to some form of intentionality or directness. Intentionality and directness represent, however, only one facet of the power matrix. Lukes remarks that power can also operate through acts of passivity and negative action, i.e. by means of receiving change while remaining inactive, or initiating change through a chain of unintended consequences.²⁹⁸ The extension of power’s scope into the realm of mediated effectiveness does not suffice to negate the importance of immediate forms of power as structuring and potentially transformative forces, yet it highlights power’s structural facets and demonstrates that intentionality and the positivity of actions are potentially insignificant for the mobilization of capacity.²⁹⁹ Departing from this understanding of power as the precondition for being able to exalt a transformative momentum - induced either actively or passively - one can identify three traditions that analyze the effects of power as act-capacity.

2.1 Capability-based models: classical and structural realism

Materialist takes on power assume that it can be possessed, accumulated, quantified, and utilized. It is consequently enshrined in an actor’s capabilities such as military capacity, its economic base, demographic developments, or geopolitical location. Power, if understood as an accumulation of capabilities, operates largely on the surface of the political plane and contributes to an ever shifting balance among actors.³⁰⁰ Despite impacting decisively on the international system’s

²⁹⁷ Steven Lukes, “Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005): 478.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 478 ff.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 479.

³⁰⁰ Jennifer Sterling-Folker & Rosemary E. Shinko, “Discourses of Power: Traversing the Realist-Postmodern Divide”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005): 637.

distributive hierarchy materialist notions of power do not have any influence on its operating-principles. The deep-structure of the state-based international system remains essentially leaderless, and the distribution of capabilities changes only relations among states, but leaves the anarchical character of ‘the international’ intact. Power as capability becomes then a necessary means for survival in a world of states that lacks a centralized ordering force. Over the past decades theorists have offered various explanations for states behavior in this particular setting.

Classical realists such as Morgenthau³⁰¹ and Niebuhr³⁰² are typical first and second-image thinkers, for whom individuals as well as states are characterized by a deeply rooted drive for domination - an *animus dominandi* - that translates into a fierce quest for power. International politics is routinely perceived as being driven by this virtually limitless lust for power and embraces tragical elements of passion, fear, glory, and self-interest.³⁰³ Although third-image explanations, which take the structuring effects of anarchy on the international system into account are not absent from Morgenthau’s theory of international politics, they are none the less heavily under-theorized and trumped by first- and second-image interpretations. What drives international politics is then not inscribed into the anarchical makeup of the international system as such, but can rather be traced back to the behavior of individual states and their respective desires for syndetic domination. Any notion of anarchy - a concept absolutely central to structural realism - counts only as a second-order phenomenon and springs from the initial, individually rooted urge to dominate. In this narrative power does not count as a means to an end that would increase competitiveness across units. Its is rather an end by and in itself, utilized for the sole purpose of increasing superiority in opposition to ones competitors. The facets of power offered by classical realism are, however, much more dazzling than the ones mobilized in the neo-realist

³⁰¹ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*.

³⁰² Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society - A study on Ethics and Politics* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010).

³⁰³ Schmidt, “Competing Realist Conceptions of Power”, 533.

school of thought, since as they pay attention to both, material capabilities and relational forces in international affairs.³⁰⁴ Central to Morgenthau's national power-approach are not only material capabilities, i.e. industrial capacity or military preparedness, but also relational factors such as national character, national morale, and the quality of diplomacy.³⁰⁵ All of these factors are supposed to enhance the state's fitness for the purpose of dominating other states and to resist, conversely, its own domination: keeping power (securing the status quo), increasing power (an imperialist or revolutionary element), and demonstrating power (for the purpose of deterrence) are the recurring logics of international affairs.³⁰⁶ Unpredictability and uncertainty are ever present conditions in global politics, and since there is virtually no stabilizing or ordering element present in the international environment the only way of safeguarding ones survival comprises in the cultivation and maximization of all sorts of capabilities and the enhancement of a state's national-power-score.

Structural realism shares with its classical predecessor the general conviction of an inseparable intertwinement of politics and power. Yet, classical realism's power-centered first- and second-image interpretations (with their respective emphasis on the actions of individuals and states) has become dislodged in favor of a security-centered reading which claims that "the quest for power is due not to any desire for power as such, but to a general human craving for security".³⁰⁷ Structural realism substitutes "tragedy for evil" by means of replacing the "mad Cesar' (...) of the pure power model (...) by the 'hysterical Cesar' who" is haunted by fear.³⁰⁸ By shifting the focus of its analysis away from ontological claims about human nature, and gearing its inquiry decidedly towards the structural determinisms immanent to the international system, neo-realism moved anarchy into the spotlight of IR theorizing. Anarchy - or the absence of an overarching,

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 531.

³⁰⁵ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 113 ff.

³⁰⁶ Schmidt, "Competing Realist Conceptions of Power", 535.

³⁰⁷ Arnold Wolfers, "The Pole of Power and the Pole of Indifference", *World Politics* 4, no. 1 (1951): 42.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

centralized, ordering force in international affairs - disembogues into a condition of general insecurity and portrays the international as a realm dominated by a self-help logic: in order to further the state's primary interest of survival it needs to marshal its own capabilities as effectively as possible in order to enjoy a maximum degree of non-domination. A strategy favored by states for the purpose of securing their survival is the accumulation of sufficient assets - i.e. offensive military capabilities - that help to deter competitors, allow for limited freedom of action, and guarantee a sufficient degree of independence. The international's anarchical makeup is stabilized in the form of a fragile equilibrium manifest in the figure of *balance of power*.³⁰⁹

In this context defensive realism stresses the security-maximizing character of states: cautious sovereign polities only wish to accumulate an appropriate amount of power that helps them to secure their essential interest in survival, without triggering significant balancing-responses from competing sovereigns.³¹⁰ On the contrary offensive realism leans heavily towards the previously discussed classical reading of international affairs and argues that power-maximization is the best way of safeguarding the integrity of ones interests. Consequently expansionist and hegemonic foreign policies are perceived as a legitimate way of securing a state's survival under anarchy and in the context of a self-help system.³¹¹

Neo-realism offers an important contribution to the field of IR research as a result of highlighting the elements of structural power. It portrays the international not only as a discrete political realm, but highlights its qualities as an autonomous facet of power in its own right due to its prolific effects on inter-state relations: in the same way the market dictates the logic of profit to a corporation, the international dictates the logic of security to the state.³¹² Regardless of its valuable contributions to the IR-field neo-realism also suffers

³⁰⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions", *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994/95): 9 ff.

³¹⁰ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

³¹¹ John J. Mearsheimer, *The tragedy of Great Power politics* (New York: Norton, 2001).

³¹² Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory", 618 f.

from a poverty of imagination since it abandons power's relational features (which were so vividly drawn by Morgenthau) in favor of a reductionist materialist/capability-based perspective. The complications that loom when slashing power down to its discrete and non-relational components, as well as the conceptual limitations attached to Waltz' lump-concept of power, will be addressed in greater details in section *three*.

2.2 Discursive approaches: post-structural takes on power

Post-structuralism overlaps with classical and structural realism to the extent that both emphasize the ontological primacy of power that lies at the heart of the political process. Where post-structuralism differs from the previously discussed realist school of thought is in its objection to a reading of power as a predominantly material property. It highlights instead power's covert functionalities which operate beneath a material, capability-dominated surface and permeates the deep-structure of the international system by way of creating and reproducing distinctive socio-cultural practices. Power's efficacy is difficult to quantify since it works through this variety of criss crossing discourses, some of them hegemonic, others subordinated and secondary, which, in turn, condition the fabric of the international and sculpt shared institutions, intersubjectively constructed knowledge, agent-to-agent relations, and even the 'management' of bodies.³¹³ Power is then, to use a chess-analogy, not the sum of knights, rooks, and pawns at a players disposal, but rather the discourse that surrounds the chessboard itself - a discourse that creates, maintains, rationalizes, and enforces the game and its rules while synchronously opening and delimiting space for maneuver of an actor's resources.

Whilst realism affirms the actor-driven role of power that is underlined by the capacity to initiate and receive change, poststructuralism follows a subject-centered approach in which agents slip into a much more ambiguous role. Instead of being reduced to discrete and detached handlers of power that wield their

³¹³ Sterling-Folker & Shinko, "Discourses of Power", 637.

capabilities like tools, agents themselves are seen as being part of a complex web of capillary relations in which hitherto clear cut subject/object-, handler/handled-, powerful/powerless-distinctions break down and bleed into one another. This dissolution of the modern subject-object barrier happens against the backdrop of biopolitical production, immanent socialization, permanent normalization, pervasive acts of control, and subtle mechanisms of policing.³¹⁴ It does not come as a surprise then that power is predominantly characterized as a disciplinary force and works through hegemonic discourses. Relations of power are taken for granted and continue to resonate as an integral part of an intersubjectively composed reality in which naturalized and unchallenged perceptions of the world are manifest in the uniformity and regularities of behavior.³¹⁵ Foucault notes, however, that power can never be exercised without certain acts of defiance and that every demonstration of power produces its own form of resistance. Power is dispersed through the gauze of intersubjectively accepted meanings and produces subjects capable of repositioning themselves within the social matrix. Especially the expression of difference, i.e. through novel practices and the conduction of previously undiscovered or unimagined alliances, opens up productive spaces, and challenges naturalized and normalized perceptions of how our political surroundings are supposed to function.³¹⁶

It is this prospect of dissent which demonstrates the clearest demarcation from the realist concept of power. As previously discussed, IR-realism works under the assumption that either human nature or the anarchical makeup of the international system forces actors into a corset of rules which define - in an aprioristic fashion - how agents are supposed to conduct themselves within the international environment. The strength of discourse-based framings of power does then not lie in their ability to devise strategies that would allow actors to navigate this system more successfully, but can rather be found in their de-

³¹⁴ Lukes, "Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds", 491.

³¹⁵ Anna Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability: Non-State Actors' Capital in Global Governance", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005): 733.

³¹⁶ Sterling-Folker & Shinko, "Discourses of Power", 655.

naturalizing character that asks questions about the very origin of this competition. Instead of taking anarchy, uncertainty, self-help, and survivalism as non-negotiable facts the post-structural analysis of power pays attention to the productive discourses surrounding these taken-for-granted concepts. As an example, Ashley's analysis of the *anarchy problematique* destabilizes the universal narrative of sovereignty and demonstrates that inter-state competition is neither a direct consequence of bellicose human nature nor an effect of systemic anarchy, but rather the result of a heroic discourse which establishes a hierarchical binary where supposedly stable patterns of centralized order and sovereignty are privileged over the allegedly chaotic conditions of anarchy.³¹⁷ In a different fashion Reid argues that the notorious *War on Terror* does not count as an exercise of classical imperialism, but is instead part and parcel of a larger global projection of biopolitical power with the aim to strategically reshape subject-positions in the context of 'empire'.³¹⁸ Last but not least, Hardt and Negri contend that the current international order is characterized by a decidedly novel form of postmodern sovereignty which replaces anarchical inter-state competition with a transnational hierarchy of imperial, biopolitical patterns of control and command.³¹⁹

2.3 Soft power: the power of persuasion

A third possible angle from which the complex of power in IR can be accessed is via a 'soft power' framing. Soft power could be perceived as an attempt of bringing realist and poststructural notions of power closer together since the approach combines the intentionality of the former with the discourse-centered elements of the latter. Nye defines soft power as the ability to shape other's preferences and to co-opt rather than coerce them into doing something. Soft power hence differs from influence - which rests on hard power - and works

³¹⁷ Richard K. Ashley, "Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 17, no. 2 (1988): 227 ff.

³¹⁸ Julian Reid, "The Biopolitics of the War on Terror: a critique of the 'return of imperialism' thesis in international relations", *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (2005): 237 ff.

³¹⁹ Hardt & Negri, *Empire*.

instead through mechanism of attraction.³²⁰ While hard power has to use coercion and intimidation in order to produce effects, soft power relies instead on more subtle techniques that generate lasting patterns of positive affirmation, for example by means of fostering attraction and appeal for one's ideas and ideals.³²¹

Due to soft power's strong ideational underpinning it is no capability in the classical sense on whose possession states would have a monopoly. Contrary to the previously discussed material capabilities it is possible to distribute soft power-resources widely among a broad array of domestic and international political agents. Soft power then counts as a resource also available to non-state actors, and it allows them to develop an arsenal of talk-centric capabilities through the mobilization of symbolic resources and their work as norm entrepreneurs. A level playing field emerges, and similar to states NGOs can utilize language as a tool to alter social structures, shape preferences, and generate patterns of expected behavior. Holzscheiter demonstrates that the power politics of the supposedly powerless matters especially within international organizations where one can find the discursive economy of global politics. Within these institutions and organizations a language-market exists and symbolic capital is traded vividly. In this context NGOs function as 'honest brokers' and norm entrepreneurs, and infuse content into intergovernmental discussions that would otherwise go unnoticed by state-actors.³²² Although most NGOs suffer from a situation of chronic underfunding they have none the less an invaluable asset at their disposal, namely their credibility. A nimbus of alleged altruism and unselfishness often surrounds non-state actors, and the general public usually assigns great credibility to them, which bestows NGOs with the unofficial mandate of acting as the 'people's voice'. Although non-state actors are routinely excluded from the diplomatic part of intergovernmental negotiations they can play a crucial role when it comes to agenda-setting and opinion-building. In this

³²⁰ Lukes, "Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds", 485.

³²¹ Janice Bially Mattern, "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005): 587.

³²² Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability", 725-738.

process the presumably soft element of language can be utilized for a great variety of maneuvers, such as attracting followers, mobilizing public opinion, formulating accusations, or the mounting of an extra-parliamentary opposition.³²³

The attractiveness of the soft power-approach lies certainly in its attempt to transform the mechanisms of power politics by dint of substituting latently violent coercion in favor of cooperatively oriented modes of persuasion. In the wake of this positive affirmation it needs to be acknowledged that soft power is none the less in a position to marshal representational force and non-material threats.³²⁴ An audience is then menaced with unthinkable mischief unless it submits: “the harm promised is to the victim’s *own* ontological security - it is a threat that exploits the fragility of the sociolinguistic ‘realities’ that constitute the victim’s Self”.³²⁵ As a sociolinguistic compound an actor’s self-perception depends heavily on its recognition by fellow agents. Certain powerful actors find themselves in positions that allow them to challenge and transform this identity: they can then inflict severe damage on a peer’s self-image and alter its social standing within the community that grants recognition and ontological security in the first place.³²⁶

An example that reveals the coercive potential inherent to soft power is the US’ effort of alliance-building in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. Back then it was of outmost interest to the government to forge and control the narratives that unfolded around the event, mainly for the purpose of rounding up allies that would approve of a military intervention. As part of this attempt the US had to articulate the conditions of its own attractiveness, and it did so by invoking the rhetorical figures of the *coalition of the willing* and the *axis of evil*. The manichean division of the world into good and bad, us and them, helped to alter the nature of the *War on Terror*. Instead of selling it as what it was, namely one possible choice among a plethora of political options, it was pitched as the only

³²³ Ibid., 740-743.

³²⁴ Mattern, “Why ‘Soft Power’ Isn’t So Soft”, 583 & 602.

³²⁵ Ibid., 586.

³²⁶ Ibid., 585-601.

logical and remaining way of action if one wishes to remain in the camp of the *good*, the *willing*, and the *free*. Opting for this strategy had nothing to do with increasing ones attractiveness and counting on voluntary induced pledges of allegiance - it was instead a clear cut case of forming an entourage molded by non-material threats and representational force.³²⁷ Actors whose social identity relied to a great extent on the endorsement of the US - Egypt, Jordan, Syria - needed the join the coalition of the willing, regardless of their actual preferences, in order to protect their identities from damage, harm, and 'social death'. Others, who could draw from identities firmly rooted in alternative social matrixes - France and Germany for example, with their european identity -, were less dependent on US' approval and unreceptive to the exercise of representational force.

3. Common grounds and insurmountable divides

The previous section has demonstrated that power operates on various levels and through a multiplicity of media, and that the concept is, first and foremost, an either material or ideational force which imposes certain ways of doing things.³²⁸ In consequence it needs to be acknowledged that power is not crystalline but appears instead as an amorphous structure, able to create and maintain forms of social interactions, while exposing these structures to flux and change at the very same time. These modes of change take place within certain corridors of possibility. For realism change occurs within a configuration of state-based agents which attempt to survive in an anarchical environment. In a post-structural reading transformation is imminent when acts of resistance towards hegemonic discourses rupture structural fixity.³²⁹ The brief survey into IRs takes on power has also demonstrated that the discipline is far away from speaking with one voice, and incapable of providing a definitive answer to the question what power is, how it operates, and where it comes from. This frayed

³²⁷ Ibid., 604.

³²⁸ Sterling-Folker & Shinko, "Discourses of Power", 640.

³²⁹ Ibid., 642.

nature of the discourse and its division into hard, poststructural, and soft readings of power suggests a divide alongside epistemic lines. All three branches of IR-theorizing agree on the ontological primacy of power - the question remaining unanswered is how to access this ontological core: through the study of material capabilities, hegemonic discourses, or ideational attraction?

Lipschutz offers a helpful disentanglement of this dilemma and positions power as an object with at least four facets, each of which constitutes a separate social force. The major line of division runs between power's *distributive* and *constitutive* layers. So far the power-discourse has largely been focusing on these distributive dimension which inquires into the "authority to divide, distribute, expropriate" - who gets what, when, how? -, eventually paying major attention to *direct* and *institutional* forms of force.³³⁰ While *direct power* enables the sovereign to "use force, coercion, manipulation or influence to protect or pursue its interest", *institutional power* is the ability of a social subject to "engage in agenda-setting, law-making or role-setting to distribute resource to favoured interests".³³¹ What is largely neglected by the realist tradition and finds recognition only in certain poststructural approaches are forms of power concerned with the *constitutive* aspects of politics, entailing the "authority to define, decree, decide"³³² (see chapter II for an in-depth discussion). Again it is possible to subdivide this category once more, namely into *structural* and *productive power*. *Structural* power refers to the capacity to "structure conditions through rules governing political economy." *Productive* power is a collective agent's capacity to "affect [the] ethical basis of action through language, habitus or structuration".³³³ A more comprehensive approach on power in IR-theory needs to take this multi-faceted appearance of force into account if it wants to do justice to the complexity of global politics. What is required is a synthetic approach to power in IR, capable of paying equal attention to the distributive and constitutive aspects of force.

³³⁰ Lipschutz, "Power, Politics and Global Civil Society", 751 f.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

4. From power to force: anarchist contributions to IR's power-discourse

In taking the claim about the multilayered quality of power seriously the chapter's final sections conveys an alternative reading and suggests to conceive of power as a synthetic phenomenon, capable of operating outside the aforementioned materialism/idealism- and distribution/constitution-divides. As pointed out, problem-solving realism focuses primarily on the distribution of material capabilities, while rationalizing discourses are largely taken for granted. Conversely, post-structuralism concerns itself prominently with such constitutive, disciplining, enabling, and constraining aspects of global politics, and assigns only a secondary status towards distributive effects.³³⁴ The anarchist notion of power in general, and Proudhon's concept of *force* in particular, differs from the entrenched dualism of the prevailing discourse and allows for a more fine-grained approach towards power in global affairs. This section of the chapter discusses Proudhon's take on power and contrasts *force* with the aforementioned interpretations. Proudhon's *Little Political Catechism* - part of his magnum opus *Justice in the Revolution and in the Church* - provides the basis for this discussion. The *Catechism* offers a condensed, yet rather explicit description of Proudhon social ontology and its intimate intertwinement with *collective force*.

4.1 Power as collective force

At the beginning of the *Catechism* Proudhon asks "what constitutes the reality of social power?" and imminently delivers a short, yet rather straight forward answer: "The collective force".³³⁵ Upon proceeding further the text offers a more detailed definition of the quality of this force:

³³⁴ Sterling-Folker & Shinko, "Discourses of Power", 655.

³³⁵ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, "Little Political Catechism", in *Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology*, ed. Ian McKay (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011), 654.

*Any being, and by that I mean only what exists, what is reality, not a phantom, a pure idea, possesses in itself, to whatever degree, the faculty or property, as soon as it finds itself in the presence of other beings, of being able to attract and be attracted, to repulse and be repulsed, to move, to act, to think, to PRODUCE, at the very least to resist, by its inertia, influences from the outside. The faculty of property, one calls force.*³³⁶

This short paragraph makes two important statements about the nature of power: *first*, and foremost, force can only be found in the realm of the palpable, which highlights the decidedly non-transcendental character of power. Proudhon stresses the actuality of power, whose exercise is closely tied to the physical existence of an agent who wields social force in the first place. The tangible existence of ‘the reality of social power’, and the possibility to generate force, are hence inseparable intertwined. Upon highlighting the actual character of power Proudhon emphasizes the humanist origins of act-capacity, which can only derive from concrete material or ideational relations, but never from a removed agent such as god, fate, providence, or spirit.

The *second* insight to be derived from the opening sequence of the *Catechism* concerns power’s strict relationality: the force wielded by a social agent manifests itself ‘as soon as it finds itself in the presence of other beings’. Power shouldn’t be perceived as a property that would exist autonomously and independently of the social context into which it is embedded. The inherent sociability of humans gives rise to the concept of social force in the first place, and demonstrates the productive nature of human interaction.

Especially this second claim is of importance when deploying the theory of *social force* into an IR-context. Certain capability-centered IR theories tend to conceive of a state’s military, its industrial capacity, or its demographics as fragmented elements of national power which contributes individually to the overall fitness of the state.³³⁷ Perceiving of the state as an agent is, in Proudhon’s reading, defensible and it could indeed be argued that a state as an actor is constituted by agglomerated force. Problems arise as soon as capabilities are

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 113 ff.

framed as discrete entities that exist in a condition of subordination towards the larger complex of the state-*force*. What is at stake here is the qualitative difference between aggregative and agglomerated types of force.

4.2 From aggregation to agglomeration

It has already been indicated that Proudhon concurs with certain strands of contemporary IR-theory to the extent that the nature of politics in general, and the state in particular, is closely underpinned by multiple sets of power-relations. Yet, the relationship between state and power is by no means unidirectional. A state is not simply a handler of powerful resources, but, at the very same time, constituted by a complex interplay of *forces* in itself. In this respect it is important to draw a sharp line between the state imagined as an *aggregation of force* - like in Waltz' lump concept of power³³⁸ - and the state understood as an *agglomeration of forces*, in which new forms of power can emerge solely by virtue of productive social interaction. Departing from this understanding that individual and collective agents are respectively equipped with *force*, Proudhon explains the relationship between individuals, collectivities, and their mutually constitutive capacity to power³³⁹:

*To speak here only of human collectivities, let us suppose that the individuals, in such number as one might wish, in whatever manner and to whatever end, group their force: the resultant of these agglomerated force which must not be confused with their sum, constituted the force of power of the group.*³⁴⁰

Assigning the power, or more accurately the social force, that is exalted by collective agents such as the state to the mere summing up of individual capabilities would hence be erroneous. It is rather the constitutive interplay between the initial carriers of force - i.e. individual political agents - which gives collectivities their power. This line of reasoning has a fairly abstract taste to it, for

³³⁸ Brian C. Schmidt, "Realism and facets of power in international relations", in *Power in World Politics*, ed. Felix Berenskoetter & M.J. Williams (New York: Routledge, 2007), 53.

³³⁹ Proudhon, "Little Political Catechism", 655.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

which reason it is applicable to link Proudhon back to the IR-discourse. In *Theory of International Politics* Waltz describes the capability-based lump concept of power as follows:

States, because they are in a self-help system, have to use their combined capabilities in order to serve their interests. The economic, military, and other capabilities of nations cannot be sectored and separately weighted. State are not placed in the top rank because they excel in one way or another. Their rank depends on how they score on all of the following items: size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence.³⁴¹

Brian C. Schmidt rightly assails the one-dimensionality of Waltz' reading, which tells us little about the *social forces* that work in and through the state-form. Instead, the capability-based model "represent[s] nothing more than the total sum of a number of loosely identified national attributes"³⁴², while disregarding case-specific patterns of interconnectedness, cooperation, and also conflict among these sub-units. Waltz clearly idealizes the state as a sort of supreme being that lucidly manages the supposedly passive capabilities at its disposal from an elevated position, and for the purpose of surviving in the competitive environment of international anarchy. The mythical figure of the state is implicitly portrayed as the prime arbiter of social forces, having the power over them at its fingertips, and commanding a plethora of complex yet obedient societal actors according to its will.

A scenario in which the proverbial tail wags with the dog, and where a seemingly passive capability exercises considerable influence over the state, appears as hardly thinkable from this theoretical angle. Yet it is perfectly imaginable from an empirical perspective. Consider the case of Pakistan, where the military is a decisive political force in itself, and provides a great deal of stability to the internal constitution of the state.³⁴³ Another example can be found

³⁴¹ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 131.

³⁴² Schmidt, "Competing Realist Conceptions of Power", 538.

³⁴³ Mazhar Aziz, *Military Control in Pakistan - The Parallel State* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

in the realm of economy and industry. Waltz implies that economic activity is mostly a national endeavor that takes place within the close confinements of national boundaries. This might have been the case in 19th-century Europe, but it hardly reflects the interconnectedness and interdependency of the world market in the 21st century. Previously nationally limited industries are increasingly internationalized and stand on occasion in stark opposition to the imperative of the state and its goals. Not only are businesses trying to elude the grip of the state. Some of them even find themselves in a position that allows them to confront the authorities and threaten them with measures such as disinvestment and capital flight.³⁴⁴ From a state's perspective it is certainly an unpleasant experience when a supposedly passive capability suddenly starts to reverse the very logic of domination and command.

The actorhood undoubtedly inherent to supposedly subordinated capabilities demonstrates that these agents themselves exalt a considerable amount of *social force* which allows them to produce decisive political outcomes, both, domestically as well as internationally. Waltz lump-concept of power has then proven to be empirically unwarranted. Proudhon's theory of *social force*, in which natural groups agglomerate their forces, appears to be much more accurate in that regard. An interpretation of the previously discussed examples through the lens of the *social force*-approach looks quite different: the military and certain economic actors are themselves recognized as *forces*; they contribute to the act-capacity of the state but aren't viewed as being subordinated to it.

The whole (i.e. the state as an agglomerated natural group) does not trump the singular, although it produces a greater force. What needs to be kept in mind is that the whole as such is incapable of operating in lieu of its constitutive singularities (i.e. the plethoras of natural groups that operate in and through the state):

³⁴⁴ John Dryzek, "Transnational Democracy", *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (1999): 33; and Ulrich Beck, "The Cosmopolitan State: Redefining Power in the Global Age", *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 18, no. 3/4 (2005): 150 f.

Imagine a society in which all relations between individuals had suddenly ceased, in which each would provide for his own subsistence in absolute isolation: whatever amity exists between these men, whatever their proximity, their multitude would no longer form an organism, it would lose all reality and all force. Like a body whose molecules have lost the relations that determines their cohesion, at the least shock, it would collapse into dust.³⁴⁵

A family, a battalion, a city, an empire, a political party, entire industries, and last but not least the state are neither capable of acquiring nor exerting power entirely by virtue of their own making. Despite their diverging sizes and capacities they all count as natural groups. As such they are ontologically dependent on the agglomerated forces of their constituting parts. Conceiving of the state as a black-box, and assuming that its power emerges as the result of a mere aggregation of heterogenous capabilities, appears unwarranted and highly superficial from the perspective of agglomerated *social force*.

4.3 From cooperation to commutation

Acknowledging power's dependency on the agglomeration of intertwining ideational and material forces leads into a second critical distinction: between *cooperation* and *commutation*. Regarding the nature of commutation Proudhon remarks that the

active groups which make the city differing from one another in organization, as well as in their idea and object, the relation that links them is no longer really a relation of co-operation but a relation of commutation. The character of the social force will thus be primarily commutative (...).³⁴⁶

The commutative force is best described as a form of public reciprocity that differs qualitatively from mere acts of cooperation. Cooperation, for example in a market scheme, requires not necessarily an underlying socially or politically productive process and can be reduced to the mere functional activity of exchanging goods and services (c.f. institutional power). Cooperating actors

³⁴⁵ Proudhon, "Little Political Catechism", 656.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

derive their act-capacity from a source external to the reciprocal process of exchange. This decidedly liberal narrative implies that *a priori* empowered subjects enter into a relationship of trade, but retain their quality as absolute subject-positions with fixed and always already constituted identities and interests. Bottom line, cooperation can be kept mechanical, instrumental, and socio-politically unproductive. Hegel points towards this aseptic and self-sufficient character of cooperation in his description of liberal civil society and remarks that the

*concrete person who, as a particular person, as a totality of needs and a mixture of natural necessity and arbitrariness, is his own end, is one principle of civil society. [It] (...) gains satisfaction through the others, and thus at the same time through the exclusive mediation of the form of universality, which is the second principle.*³⁴⁷

The international system - especially if viewed through the lens of Waltz' billiard ball metaphor³⁴⁸ - is yet another reductionist construct that flattens the productive interplay of agents and diminishes their dealings to acts of mere cooperation. The result is a depiction of the political process as the unproductive relatedness of units that clash and collide under the sanction of a fixed system-logic. In Waltz' interpretation the international system can be very well compared to a market. Yet, while the market requires from its participants to maximize profit in order to prevail in an economically competitive environment, states operating within the international system need to maximize their security if they wish to survive in a politically anarchic setting. What the market and the international system have in common is their *a priori* fixed operating logic: "Systems theories, whether political or economic, are theories that explain how the organization of a realm acts as a constraining and disposing force on the interacting units within in. Such theories tell us about the forces to which the

³⁴⁷ G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet, ed. Allen W. Wood, (Cambridge: University Press, 2011), §182.

³⁴⁸ John M. Hobson, *The State and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 23.

units are subjected”.³⁴⁹ Within the system interactions among units is dominated by mechanical compliance and follows the script of security competition. What changes is the balance of political power within the system, depending on the distribution of capabilities among units, yet never the underlying logic of uncertainty, self-help, and anarchy itself.

Commutative force is productive by itself and cannot be reduced to the discrete interaction among pre-configured system-components. For the purpose of exemplifying the immanent productivity unleashed by the commutation between political subjects Proudhon refers to money and asks: “Is it the metal of which currency is made which has this extraordinary force?”. Followed by his answer: “No: it is in the *public reciprocity* of which currency is the sign and pledge”.³⁵⁰ From the perspective of commutative force money is not simply a transmission-belt for the process of exchange, nor is it a homogenizer that allows for the comparability of heterogenous goods and services: money is an ideational *force* in itself and constituted through the public reciprocity and the commutation between market participants.

The emergence and decline of general security provides another example for the immanent productiveness of commutation. Proudhon proclaims that throughout the Middle Ages various social and political actors, among them the Catholic church, attempted to rule the population by means of mobilizing physical force, and yet, a general sense of security was far from present: “The earth is covered with keeps and fortresses; everyone is armed and shut in; pillage and war are the order of the day”.³⁵¹ The unruliness of the population and the difficulties to establish a sense of public reciprocity that might have pacified the demos from within did, however, not result from the pitfalls of human nature, but was rather due to the fragmentedness of natural groups that prevented the commutative force from gaining traction: “But what is barbarism, or rather, what *produces* it? The incoherence of the industrial groups, their small numbers, and the

³⁴⁹ Waltz, “The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory”, 618.

³⁵⁰ Proudhon, “Little Political Catechism”, 656.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

isolation in which they act, after the example of the agricultural groups”.³⁵² Order originates from power - but only if power is understood in productive and *commutative* terms as the amalgamation and agglomeration of *collective forces* and *reasons*. Money, or a notion of general security and stability, emerges and declines through the public reciprocity that underpins the very existence of these social institutions. If the commutative force that holds such institutions upright diminishes they cannot be sustained simply through the scaffolding of an exogenous, compulsory, or direct force: during periods of inflation central banks might print exorbitant amounts of money, but its actual value can only be found in the collective believe of its universal exchangeability, which then evaporates and is lost in its extremes. In the same vain public security might be sustained for a short period of time through excessive acts policing (coercive power), but if the trust into the legitimacy of a given order vanishes it is impossible to restore by mere command. The effectiveness of exogenous force in making and sustaining societies (Foucault’s *Right of Death*³⁵³) ought hence not to be overestimated. Exogenous and compulsory force is complementary and secondary to immanent commutation. The concept of juridical sovereignty is underpinned by a widely shared notion of public reciprocity and can’t be sustained infinitely if the fabric of *the social* is irreparably ruptured and in a process of disintegration.

5. Conclusion: anarchist ‘force’ and IR theory

This chapter joined the prevalent debates on power in international politics by means of introducing the anarchist notion of force to the IR-field. Force offers, it was argued, a take on power that approaches the issue from a two-dimensional angle and makes an attempt of synthesizing materialist and ideational readings of the concept. Social and political power are indeed characterized by a material facet, and operates through individual and aggregated agents which mobilize their respective forces in various areas of political concern, i.e. during

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1* (London: Penguin, 1998), 135 ff.

the processes of labor or by forming a multitude of political groups. Force consequently counts as an emerging property and reveals itself differently in heterogenous political settings, having both enabling and constraining effects on political agents, depending on the specific socio-historical alignment of force-carrying actors. Yet, although being ontologically grounded in the phenomena of the material world, force can hardly be accumulated indefinitely. Far more decisive is the combined material and ideational situatedness and embeddedness of individual and collective actors, whose respective configuration gives rise to historically contingent clusters comprising of overlapping, intertwining, and hetero-scalar assemblages of actors. Manifestations of force are variegated and cannot be reduced to a few ontologically privileged actors, such as nations, the state-form, or prominent NGOs. Proudhon notes that force can be found in small-scale units such as families, workshops, battalions, or cities - yet, upon extending his logic it becomes apparent that the anarchist conception of force is not just limited to the local and domestic realm, but can also play a role in international affairs, for example by means of explaining inter-state relations, the formation of empires, or the emergence and perpetuation of the international system.

What are then the conceptual ramifications of the preceding discussion and to what extent might the mobilization of Proudhon's theory of power be of use for IR? How would such a mobilization look like in more concrete terms? By means of a conclusion this chapter charts four separate yet intertwined lines of action, each of which attempts to fathom the possibility of an anarchist informed contribution to IR-theory that draws from the addressed concept of *force*.

(I) The preceding considerations on realist, poststructural, and soft power approaches to international affairs (section *two*) problematized the materialism-idealism divide alongside which IR's power-discourse operates. The concept of *force* is certainly not in a position to bridge this split for good, mainly because *force* itself is broken up into respective materialist (*collective force*) and ideational (*collective reason*) facets. Yet, this deeply ingrained dualism exists by design rather than by accident, and it demonstrates a strong interdigitation between materialist and

ideational lines of reasoning. Force's makeup is deliberately synthetic, and perfectly capable of accommodating the two logics under one conceptual roof, while avoiding to give primacy to either side. This dualism is evident in Proudhon's writings: early texts such as *What is Property?* put an emphasis on materialist mechanisms and seek to demonstrate how processes of labor create surplus-value via the commutation and agglomeration of individual material forces.³⁵⁴ Whereas sections of *Justice in the Revolution and the Church* thematize the emergence of *force* as public and collective reason through the antagonistic interplay of individual reasons.³⁵⁵ It is in *Justice* where Proudhon puts *collective force* and *collective reason* side by side when arguing that both facets of power come into existence due to the productive interplay of individual forces.³⁵⁶ Only the social context in which power gets mobilized decides about their respective emphasis. In that respect Prichard remarks that "the larger a political unit, the more fragile it is and the more it depends on collective reason to hold together its collective force; the smaller it is, the more secure it is and the more it operates instinctively".³⁵⁷ The implied interconnectedness flows naturally and serves as an integral part of social force - any definitive choice between its materialist and ideational components appears as a nonsensical and violent reduction of power's complexity.

(II) *Force* is also suited to work across the distribution-constitution divide thematized by Lipschutz (section *three*). The distribution of collective forces and collective reasons impacts heavily on the character and internal capacity of natural groups³⁵⁸, and the mechanisms of agglomeration (interplay between agents) and commutation (productiveness inherent to agglomeration) shed light on the constitutive elements of politics. Constituent power - Hardt's "democratic forces of social transformation, the means by which humans make their own

³⁵⁴ Proudhon, *What is Property?*

³⁵⁵ Proudhon, *Die Gerechtigkeit in der Revolution und in der Kirche*, 292 ff.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 431.

³⁵⁷ Prichard, *Justice, Order and Anarchy*, 142.

³⁵⁸ Proudhon, "Little Political Catechism", 656.

history”³⁵⁹ or Schmitt’s capacity “to make something from that which is not something and thus is not subject to laid-down laws”³⁶⁰ - is strangely absent from contemporary IR and IPT discourses³⁶¹, but it serves as an integral part of the theory of *force*. In *Philosophy of Progress* Proudhon analyses the tensions between ‘the absolute’ (constituted power) and ‘progress’³⁶² (constituent power) and develops an approach to politics that is decidedly geared towards a mobilization of the latter.³⁶³ By means of paying closer attention to constitutive elements of power in international affairs it becomes possible to re-conceptualize a wide array of IR’s key concepts (i.e. spatiality, sovereignty, agency) alongside the lines of a constituent, anarchist-informed approach to power.³⁶⁴

(III) Agglomeration and commutation are particularly powerful devices when mobilized in the context of natural-group-formation due to their potential to destabilize IR’s pervasive domestic/international binary. The natural groups-perspective undermines the attached inside/outside dichotomy and allows for a displacement of the state-centered framing of *the international*, in favor of polity-focused concept of *the global*. This refined take on ontology rejects the assumption that the reality of international affairs is one of a statist world. The global’s ontology is instead portrayed as an assemblage of socio-political topographies and polities of varying scales - a landscape scattered with cliffs, archipelagos, planes, caves, and no-mans lands, that differs sharply from the smooth homogeneity of a universal Westphalian republic. Cerny’s observation, according to which “international politics works as an increasingly complex institutional and behavioural superstructure crisscrossing with both domestic

³⁵⁹ Hardt, “Three Keys to Understanding Constituent Power”, vii-viii.

³⁶⁰ Schmitt, *Political Theology - Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, xxvii.

³⁶¹ Markus Patberg, “Constituent Power beyond the State: An Emerging Debate in International Political Theory”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 42, no. 1 (2013): 225.

³⁶² Proudhon, *The Philosophy of Progress*, 10.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 22 ff.

³⁶⁴ Christian Pfenninger, “Reclaiming Sovereignty: Constituted and Constituent Power in Political Theory”, *E-International Relations*, January 12, 2015, <http://www.e-ir.info/2015/01/12/reclaiming-sovereignty-constituted-and-constituent-power-in-political-theory/>.

politics, domestic and transnational society, and sub-units of states”³⁶⁵ is perfectly captured by the natural-groups-approach, whose sociologically underpinned narrative differs strongly from system-approaches to international affairs. These approaches operate alongside a domestic/international-divide, which emphasizes the ontological primacy of a limited number of privileged actors, usually states, NGOs, IGOs, and TNCs. Proudhon is decidedly unorthodox when defining the essence of a natural group and remarks that any social, economic, or political formation with a sense of unity can fall into this category.³⁶⁶ The label ‘natural group’ hence applies to small scale units, but equally befits larger arrangements like states and empires. From a natural-groups-perspective these units are characterized by a difference that is merely quantitative rather than qualitative. What matters is how *force* is mobilized by an actor for the purpose of producing a series of global political outcomes - its location (local, domestic, international, transnational) and socio-political function (an activist group, a union, a political party, or a multinational corporation) is only of secondary concern to the analysis.

(IV) Last, but not least, Proudhon’s political theory can also serve as an important bridgehead into IR, allowing anarchist writers to connect with an academic discipline formerly alien to them. The anarchist contribution to the IR-field is scarce, and neither IR-scholars nor left wing libertarian activists themselves seem to be aware of the fact that there is an anarchist tradition of studying international affairs (c.f. chapter I). If, at all, the consciousness of an anarchist take on international relations manifests itself in terms of transnational activism, anti-globalization-movements, and an orthodox and sometimes unreflected opposition to centralization and stratification. Anarchism, it is implied, is particularly skilled at mounting resistance against prevalent patterns of order, but it has little to contribute to the emergence and maintenance of order itself. Proudhon reminds both, IR-scholars and anarchist practitioners alike, that

³⁶⁵ Philip G. Cerny, “Reframing the International”, *European Review of International Studies* 1, no. 1 (2014): 15.

³⁶⁶ Alex Prichard, “Anarchy, Anarchism and International Relations”, in *The Continuum Companion to Anarchism*, ed. Ruth Kinna (London: Continuum, 2012), 106.

anarchism and IR are by no means incommensurable but have to be understood as complementing each other in various respects. Proudhon's political theory has the potential to act as the much needed hub between anarchism and IR by means of providing an access-point for authors who have not published explicitly on international affairs. Notably in this respect are Stirner and Landauer - who thematize the potentially totalizing power of discourses as an instrument of governmentality -, Kropotkin - with his anarchist take on human nature and his theory of mutual aid -, and Bakunin - who stresses the politically productive power of collectivities. These authors would be able to join IR debates by proxy and through an engagement with some of Proudhon's central themes, for example the theory of social force, the process of natural group formation, or the dynamics unfolded by constituent power. The openness and the versatility of Proudhon's political theory speaks to various classical authors in the anarchist spectrum who couldn't otherwise be mobilized for debates on global politics.

CHAPTER SIX

VI | CAPILLARIES OF FORCE

1. Introduction: framing ‘the international’

So far the argument has progressed in three consecutive steps: through a systematic reading of classical and neo-classical texts on geopolitics in chapter II the underrepresentation of productive/constituent power in international political theory was confirmed. A narrow fixation on coercive and institutional power (constituted power) leads to an interpretation of global political dynamics as a function of Westphalian inter-state politics. Chapters III and IV argued for the mobilization of anarchist political theory in an IR-context and to build a platform capable of mobilizing constituent power in international political theory. The argument was honed in further by an in-depth assessment of Proudhon’s theory of force. Chapter V came to a full circle by means of discussing the implications of anarchist ‘force’ for IR-theory.

At this point a conceptual basis has emerged, from which it is possible to branch out, and to discuss further implications for IR-research. This thesis addresses, as already highlighted in the introduction, the incomplete and partial mobilization of anarchist political philosophy in IR, and offers a more holistic and complete anarchist approach to the discipline’s *grand themes*. Towards that end

the thesis engages with dominant IR-key-concepts such as power, ontology, agency, sovereignty, and ethics, and aims at scrutinizing and destabilizing them. The purpose of such an exercise is the cultivation of a critical narrative, capable of creating room for accounts of transnational political agency beyond the confinements of Westphalian inter-state politics. The upcoming chapters VI, VII, and VIII will address these issues, and ask to what extent the co-mobilization of anarchist political theory and constituent power supports such a critical engagement with IR's *grand themes*. In more concrete terms it is asked how anarchist takes on power in international affairs, the ontology of the global (both chapter VI), sovereignty, agency in international politics (both chapter VII), the spatial ordering of the global, and the ethics of world politics (both chapter VIII) looks like.

Chapter VI will now address matters of ontology, and discusses the difference between structural and process-oriented approaches to IR. Section *one* highlights properties of anarchic ontologies and ontological anarchy. Section *two* develops an anarchist account of 'the international', while putting a special emphasis on the importance of natural-group-formation (a theme already touched upon in chapter V) and different types of power politics. The concluding section *three* discusses the topography of global politics and the normative implications of micro-politics.

1.1 The international beyond the state

Structural approaches to IR portray the 'the international' as a distinct political realm about which independent theories can be fashioned.³⁶⁷ Waltz describes the function of structural IR as follows: "To be a success, such a theory has to show how international politics can be conceived of as a domain distinct from the economic, social, and other international domains that one may conceive of".³⁶⁸ The international is, according to such theories, not only analytically distinct from other realms of human interaction, but operates, in

³⁶⁷ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 79.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

addition, under the premise of an exclusive set of rules: its anarchic configuration leads towards the ever present possibility of conflict and forces states to conduct their mutual affairs under the premise of a self-help logic. Liberal IR theories refrain from buying into the realist narrative of fear, yet, they don't necessarily shy away from structural theorizing either. Deudney and Ikenberry perceive of the international as a distinctive structural realm, capable of imposing certain modes of actions on the behavior of states. Structural liberalism displaces the realist narrative of power politics and security competition, and highlights instead aspects of security co-binding, semi-sovereignty, economic openness, or civic identities as factors for the mitigation of anarchy's potentially negative consequences.³⁶⁹

What structural approaches have in common are shared assumptions about the international's somewhat distinct character as a discrete space, governed by rules qualitatively different from other realms of inter-human affairs (i.e. the domestic sphere). Furthermore, the impression prevails that the international's ontological fabric is made of a closely knit web of Westphalian polities. International organizations and powerful non-state actors are greeted with recognition, whilst their status as ontologically dependent agents is reaffirmed. Giving ontological primacy to the state certainly has viable reasons. States are still the most prominent, and perhaps even important, actors in international politics, despite prophecies of doom about its nearing end.³⁷⁰ The state is live and well: it taxes, invests, fights, legislates, and is - historically speaking - the only major political project of universal and global reach. It is still very much attractive to be a Westphalian polity in the 21st century - a fact proven by countless secessionist movements attempting to obtain the status of 'state'. Not even radical political movements such as the notorious *Islamic State* have (ironically) managed to escape the allure of Westphalia. One must bear the label 'state' in order to gain authority

³⁶⁹ Daniel Deudney & John Ikenberry, "The nature and sources of liberal international order", *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 2 (1999): 180 ff.

³⁷⁰ Francis Fukuyama, "The End of the Nation State", *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 1995, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/1995-11-01/end-nation-state>.

and to be reckoned with – being a nation, a people, or perhaps a caliphate will not do the trick: the state remains the gold-standard of political communities.

However, framing the international through a predominantly statist lens presupposes the existence of a stasis, or perhaps coherence, that never really existed. Waltz acknowledges the international's pluralistic makeup whilst insisting that the nature of a system is, nevertheless, defined by its most dominant parts: "States are not and never have been the only international actors. But then structures are defined not by all of the actors that flourish within them but by the major ones".³⁷¹ Yet, even if one initially accepts the *majority*-thesis, a second incongruity emerges immediately, which involves the consistency of sovereignty. Treating the international *as if* it were ontologically constituted by states also requires to treat states *as if* they were always capable of acting in a genuinely sovereign fashion. After all, the systemic constraints of anarchy and security competition only exist because international society acts upon sovereign practices in the first place. Such an assumption implies the coherent existence and application of sovereignty-norms, but neglects a prevalent gap between *auctoritas* and *potestas*: the right to rule (a potentiality), versus the ability to do so (the actuality of statist power). Or, phrased differently, between the ideal type of sovereign control on the one side, and the border-penetrating forces of transnational interdependence on the other.³⁷² Against this backdrop it seems to be empirically warranted to trace the forces behind the occurrence of global political dynamics back to sociological process of bifurcation, fragmentation, and parametric change, sustained by an overlapping and intertwining array of heterogenous actors.³⁷³ In order to do justice to the complexities of global political dynamics Linklater suggests to pay attention to the sociological question of community, social learning, and the praxeological question of reform.³⁷⁴

³⁷¹ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 93.

³⁷² Alan Chong, "The post-international challenge to foreign policy: signposting 'plus non-state' politics", *Review of International Studies* 28 (2002): 785.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 786.

³⁷⁴ Andrew Linklater, "The Question of the Next State in International Relations Theory: A Critical-Theoretical Point of View", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 21, no. 1 (1992): 94 ff.

Analogous to such relationalist IR theories and their emphasis on performative relationality in international affairs, this chapter contends that a heightened focus on relations, configurations, and projects, offers not only the chance to perceive the international as a ‘process’, but also creates room for a re-imagination of the ontological standing of anarchy within IR. Rather than framing anarchy as an epiphenomenon of statism, processual relationalism allows for a notion of deep anarchy which simultaneously precedes and facilitates global political conduct. For the purpose of conceptualizing this take on ontological anarchy the chapter mobilizes in particular the works of P.J. Proudhon on natural-group-formation. A reevaluation of classical anarchist thought, it is argued, provides benefits for contemporary IR theory as it gives rise to a post-Westphalian and process-based framing of the international. The chapter wishes to contribute to a notion of anarchy as a productive and generative force, supportive of the development of processual ontologies and non-foundational groundings of ‘the international’ in a micro-political context.

1.2 The new normal: the international in transformation

Vast portions of IR still mobilize Cartesian and problem-solving visions of science and perceive of the world as a given, pre-constituted realm open for discovery.³⁷⁵ Such theories are often underpinned by a Cold-War narrative and develop a state-centric and materialistic image of the international as a relatively fixed and muted structural space.³⁷⁶ Substantialist assumptions back such theoretical endeavors, what makes it difficult to account for fast-paced change and ontological transformation in international affairs. In that regard Cox suggests to rather adopt an evolutionary perspective on international (or perhaps global) society’s history by means of paying attention to the question how

³⁷⁵ Robert Cox, “The International in Evolution”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 3 (2007): 516; and Andrew Linklater, “The achievements of critical theory”, in *Critical theory and world politics: citizenship, sovereignty and humanity*, ed. Andrew Linklater (London: Routledge, 2007), 45 ff.; and Robert W. Cox, “Social Forces, States and World Order: Beyond International Relations Theory”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (1981): 128 ff.

³⁷⁶ David Chandler, “Hollow Hegemony: Theorising the Shift from Interest-Based to Value-Based International Policy-Making”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 3 (2007): 706.

humans managed to organize themselves in groups such as states, confederations, or empires in the first place.³⁷⁷ What is required is a developmental perspective on the international's ontological makeup, one capable of accounting for structural shifts and permanent transformation. Such a change in perspective addresses one of the major inconsistencies inherent to structuralist and state-centric theories, namely the conflation of the international with the inter-state system. It appears to be much more warranted to conceive of the international as a space comprising of imagined communities and polities of varying sizes and qualities in which loyalties often overlap, morph, and transform through processes of mutual interaction. Such an integrated and multifaceted approach stands in stark contrast to framings of an interstate-system which revolves around discrete, mutually exclusive territorial spaces.³⁷⁸

Ideational factors and structural change: There is certainly no lack of transformative momentum in international affairs: institutions, discourses, and other ideational resources have the same capacity to change the structural configurations of global political arrangements like their materialist counterparts.³⁷⁹ Constructivism has shown how actors preferences and self-perceptions are neither pre-determined by exogenous forces, nor reducible to the pursuit of relatively fixed national interests, but are instead shaped and molded by intersubjectively constructed norms and values, which provide for flexible and indeterminate accounts of states preferences.³⁸⁰ Wendt demonstrates that anarchy - one of the staples of substantialist IR theory - is manifest in the form of different 'cultures'³⁸¹ and leads to the emergence of either competitive, individualistic, or cooperative security systems.³⁸² State-centric soft-power approaches allude to the generative potential of ideological attraction,

³⁷⁷ Cox, "The International in Evolution", 516.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 515.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 514.

³⁸⁰ Chandler, "Hollow Hegemony", 708.

³⁸¹ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 246 ff.

³⁸² Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics", *International Organization* 46 (1992): 400 f.

internalization, and normalization, and provide for potential inroads of non-state actors into formalized policy circles.³⁸³

Institutional transformation: Structural change is anything but staggering from a relationalist point of view, which assumes that socio-political arrangements are only sustained through continuing efforts of inter-subjective reproduction. For that reason their disappearance and transformation must be accepted as an integral part of any social arrangement.³⁸⁴ The possibility of structural transformation is in fact quite familiar to certain branches of IR theory, i.e. the English School. Institutional arrangements change over time because international society permanently re-negotiates the rules upon which it acts. One example for institutional (and consequently structural) change is the abolishment of colonialism, a practice perfectly legal and legitimate up until the first half of the 20th century, but outlawed in the following decades.³⁸⁵ This instance demarcated a structural shift away from a mixed, hierarchical international society in which imperial and statist logics existed next to one another, towards a universally and 'pure' Westphalian system.

Transformation as an event: Another concept alluding to accounts of structural transformation in world politics are events. Socio-political structures possess a relative openness for reformulation and change, which also exposes them to great amounts of instability due to the permanently present risk of disintegration.³⁸⁶ Yet, it also opens up transformative possibilities by means of positioning events as catalyzing factors for social transformation. Moore describes historical events as “a ramified sequence of occurrences that (...) is recognized as notable by contemporaries, and that (...) results in a durable transformation of structures”.³⁸⁷ Structures and events are thus antithetical: whilst the first one accounts for stability, the second one represents moments of

³⁸³ Chandler, “Hollow Hegemony”, 708; and Joseph S. Nye, *Soft power: the means to success in world politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), chapter I.

³⁸⁴ Adam Moore, “The Eventfulness of Social Reproduction”, *Sociological Theory* 29, no. 4 (2011): 303.

³⁸⁵ Buzan, *From International to World Society*, 174.

³⁸⁶ Moore, “The Eventfulness of Social Reproduction”, 298 f.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

transformative rupture. Yet, despite their essential dissimilarity both are also mutually constitutive: “Events are possible because the cultural categories that govern a society are continuously put at risk during social action”.³⁸⁸ The effects of a successfully transformative event can hence only be felt because societies exist over vast stretches of time in a state of relatively uneventful continuity. An example for an event that significantly altered the reality of international politics can be found in the passing of Security Council resolution 1970 and 1973, authorizing for the first time in UN history an intervention against a sovereign member state for the purpose of preventing ongoing human rights violations.³⁸⁹ The Libyan civil war and the following UN-sanctioned intervention finally established R2P as a viable intervention-standard, and paved the way for violations of state sovereignty for reasons other than concerns over international peace and security.

1.3 From substance to process

Structural theories with their cartesian take on science and their problem-solving outlook usually depart from a substantialist plateau and depict actors identities and their preferences as relatively fixed and static.³⁹⁰ These approaches are capable of accounting for limited systemic adjustment, i.e. when a system converts from bi-polarity into multi- or non-polarity - a process usually triggered by endogenous changes in the balance of power, resulting from the re-distribution of capabilities among units.³⁹¹ Yet, instances of adaption and re-configuration occur on top of a relatively stabile and rather inflexible Westphalian basis. Against the backdrop of such an “ontological commitment to substance”³⁹² it is much harder to rationalize passages of substantial flux, for example the

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 297.

³⁸⁹ Carrie Booth Walling, “Human Rights Norms, State Sovereignty, and Humanitarian Intervention”, *Human Rights Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (2015): 409.

³⁹⁰ Patrick T. Jackson & Daniel H. Nexon, “Relations before States: Substance, Process and the Study of World Politics”, *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 3 (1999): 293.

³⁹¹ Richard N. Haass, “The Age of Nonpolarity: What Will Follow U.S. Dominance”, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2008, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2008-05-03/age-nonpolarity>.

³⁹² Jackson & Nexon, “Relations before States”, 293.

transition from Westphalian to neo-imperial or neo-medieval systems, or the sudden collapse of bi-polar orders without a prior change in the balance of power (i.e. the end of the Cold War). Substantialist and inter-action based IR theories lead, in terms of ontological imaginability, to an impoverished, parochial depiction of the international. Collective identities are thought of having assumed a crystallized, mainly territorial shape, whereas the limits of global political spatiality are defined by the state-form. Discursive constraints to knowledge-production are imposed in two different ways, since IR's inquiries are supposed to limit themselves to processes and dynamics that occur *outside* and *in between* statist polities.³⁹³

In order to make sense of instances of widespread institutional transformation, and for the purpose of identifying applicable catalysts that trigger such reconfigurations, it is much more plausible to move from a substantialist account of the international towards a processual framing: "The politics of location, or situated knowledges, rests on process ontology to posit the primacy of relations over substances".³⁹⁴ A process-ontological account of global politics moves beyond the prevalent substantialist 'billiard ball' metaphor and emphasizes the importance of relations and activity over separateness and passivity when it comes to the production of global political outcomes. Process-based approaches do not limit their inquiries to the tangible, material, and relatively static aspects of international affairs, and can instead expose susceptibility towards messy, ideational, and non-linear practices such as nationalism, asymmetrical conflicts, or the effect of ideology or religion on global dynamics.³⁹⁵ In its most basic sense a process is an actual or possible occurrence, an integral series of connected developments, unfolding in a programmatic coordination, and initiating a group of changes.³⁹⁶ Processes are linked to one another, either causally or functionally.

³⁹³ Xavier Guillaume, "Unveiling the 'International': Process, Identity and Alterity", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 3 (2007): 747.

³⁹⁴ Rosi Braidotti, "Posthuman, All Too Human: Towards a New Process Ontology", *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 7-8 (2006): 199.

³⁹⁵ Guillaume, "Unveiling the 'International'", 741 ff.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 744.

And they are not necessarily linear, which makes it possible that several processes can indeed be constitutive of a series of relations between events while not being linked programmatically.³⁹⁷

Conceiving of the international as a performative realm, constituted by *process* rather than *substance*, sweeps away the substantialist assumption that political spaces and systems can have clear cut borders, function within neatly delimited boundaries, and operate in accordance to a single operational logic. A process-ontological account of international politics thinks instead in terms of super- and subordinate processes and their respective linkages.³⁹⁸ The international as a political entity exists only by virtue of a series of constitutive processes. Such subordinate processes are analytically distinguishable from the superordinate structure, but they are also intimately enmeshed with one another in a set of interlocking relations.³⁹⁹ Both layers of the overall configuration, the superordinate realm of international politics and the attached subordinate processes - i.e. domestic politics, local/national/global non-state actors, transnational economic actors, etc. - can only be understood properly in their respective relational and positional configuration towards one another.⁴⁰⁰

In that regard Jackson and Nexon suggest to analytically dissect the constituting dynamics of the international, and to group them in accordance to the effects they produce in categories of *processes*, *configurations*, and *projects*. Processes are, as already pointed out earlier, “causally or functionally linked set[s] of occurrences or events, which produce a ‘change in the complexion of reality’”.⁴⁰¹ They are, at first instance, nothing more than ties between actors, and can either be owned or un-owned (i.e intentional or accidental).⁴⁰² An aggregation of processes is called a configuration.⁴⁰³ While some processes are singular,

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 748.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Patrick T. Jackson & Daniel H. Nexon, “International theory in a post-paradigmatic era: From substantive wagers to scientific ontologies”, *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 3 (2013): 558.

⁴⁰¹ Jackson & Nexon, “Relations before States”, 302.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 304.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

random, one-time occurrences, configurations presuppose a certain regularity and directness. Configurations are robust patterns of continuous performative exchange between actors, such as revenue-extraction, class relations, or war-making. The third category, projects, refers to the agentic quality to which configurations can amount to: “A project is a configuration with agent properties, a social entity with the ability to make choices and exercise causal power”.⁴⁰⁴ Processes and configurations lack such agentic force, and are instead an outgrowth of agency. Projects, on the contrary, can act. States, corporations, international organizations, but also much more mundane ‘projects’ such as football clubs, an orchestra, or a family possess identities and interests on their own and cannot be reduced to the identities and interests of their constituent parts. Yet, such arrangements assume the status of a social reality only by virtue of their constitutive relations and configurations. A state is a state not because of its borders, its military, or its bureaucratic apparatus - these material realities attain meaning only within the formative context of an already existing ‘project’. A state is a state because of the ways in which a plethora of non-statist agents, i.e. ethnic groups, individuals (not citizens!), economic actors, religious authorities, and so forth, relate towards one another in a set of systematically thickened processual relations that culminate in the discursive formulation of the statist ‘project’.

1.4 Anarchic ontologies and ontological anarchy

Framing the international as a space constituted by processual arrangements displaces substantialist narratives of static and unproductive interaction in favor of a dynamic, relational ontology underpinned by “multiple overlapping and intersecting sociospatial networks of power”.⁴⁰⁵ Constituting, maintaining, and transforming such a realm is then subject to a variety of statist and non-statist operations, i.e. the mobilization of symbolic resources by imagined communities⁴⁰⁶, or acts of self-disciplining through practices of

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 307.

⁴⁰⁵ Guillaume, “Unveiling the ‘International’”, 751.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

governmentality.⁴⁰⁷ In addition, process ontologies also cast a different light on the meaning of anarchy in international affairs. Prevailing notions of anarchy are both shallow and pessimistic: *shallow* to the extent that anarchy is reduced to an epiphenomenon of statism, dwelling in the liminal zones between sovereign, territorial polities. And *pessimistic* due to the negative connotation such an image conveys. Anarchy is depicted as a problem awaiting to be managed, a potential source for instability, and as one of the root-causes for conflict in international affairs. Non-substantialist processual ontologies, on the other side, conceive of anarchy as a productive mode of existence, and assume that structure is not given from above, i.e. through some kind of hylomorphic activity, which imposes formal order on a supposedly chaotic or passive matter.⁴⁰⁸ Instead, process ontologies convey the image of an *anarchic ontology* capable of producing *order* through *relations*, *processes*, and *configurations* via *autopoiesis* (self-making, self-reproducing, self-defining).⁴⁰⁹ Furthermore, process ontologies also shed light on a condition of *ontological anarchy* and allude to the arbitrariness, the foundationlessness, and the fragility upon which socio-political practices are based.⁴¹⁰

2. Capillaries of force: towards an anarchist account of ‘the international’

This section develops an anarchist approach to IR-ontology and mobilizes the works of P.J. Proudhon, in particular the *Philosophy of Progress* and the *Political Catechism*. Proudhon never developed an explicit theory of international politics (or ontology for that matter), yet it is argued that a rearrangement of certain key approaches, most notably of natural group formation, can be used to build a process-oriented, non-foundational approach of international politics.

⁴⁰⁷ Iver Neumann & Ole Jacob Sending, “The International as Governmentality”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 3 (2007): 693.

⁴⁰⁸ Trevor Parfitt, “Hylomorphism, Complexity and Development: Planner, Artisan, or Modern Prince?”, *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (2006): 421.

⁴⁰⁹ Cudworth & Hobden, “Anarchy and Anarchism”, 403.

⁴¹⁰ for a distinction between anarchic ontologies and ontological anarchy see: Duane Rousselle & Jason Adams, “Anarchism’s Other Scene - Materializing the Ideal and Idealizing the Material”, *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies* 2, special issue “Ontological Anarché” (2013): 1 ff.

2.1 Ontological anarchy in the ‘Philosophy of Progress’

Proudhon’s take on ontology works across the previously discussed divide between substantialist and relational approaches to politics. The key document in that regard, *The Philosophy of Progress*, positions itself firmly on the processual-relational side of the conceptual spectrum, and mounts a sharp critique against the claims of ontological substantialism. It remarks that substantialism *represents* “nature, society, religion, politics, morals, etc., (...) [as] the eternal, the immutable, the perfect, the definitive, the unconvertible, the undivided”⁴¹¹ and *creates* through such an *imposing assumption* about the static quality of ‘reality’ the object of its own analysis. Such contentions of objective truths are, however, deceptive and dishonest in the eyes of Proudhon, who remarks that “the false, the fictive, the impossible, the abstract, is everything that presents itself as fixed, entire, complete, unalterable, unchanging, not susceptible to modification, conversion, augmentation or diminution”.⁴¹² The Proudhonian take on ontology exposes a strong and explicit anti-essentialism and resists any commitment towards ‘the absolute’.⁴¹³ It fashions an image of ontological anarchy which is underpinned by three consecutive key-assumptions: becoming, antinomy, and relationality.⁴¹⁴

The *first* of these assumptions, which is more of a tenor, a *Grundhaltung*, than a hard-boiled conceptual category, can be found in the rather opaque assertion that politics as such has no actual, material existence outside of permanent flux and transformation: “everything changes, everything flows, everything becomes. (...) There is nothing, neither outside nor inside, apart from that eternal dance”.⁴¹⁵ The weak post-structuralism shimmering through the flowery language might not be sufficiently rich for the purpose of theory-building. Yet, it still alludes to the bedrock assumptions that underpin Proudhon’s functional anarchism, which attempts to institutionalize the ‘eternal dance’ through a variety of economic and political arrangements (i.e. the reliance on

⁴¹¹ Proudhon, *The Philosophy of Progress*, 12.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

markets in combination with political federalism). A *second*, more solid claim, refers to an endogenous condition of antinomy which prevents social arrangements from solidifying. Material or ideational categories might *strive* towards harmony and an *attempted* balance - a tendency from which substantialist theories infer their objectivist claims. Yet, due to the composite and synthetic nature of such arrangements - their syncrisis of heterogenous and potentially contradictory parts - an amalgamated unity, or even a synthesis, remains unachievable. The state serves as an example in that regard: as a political concept and a social group it must strive towards a certain degree of unity in order to be capable of acting as an entity in the first place, i.e. through the facilitation of intra-group cohesion (among its citizens) and inter-group recognition (when dealing with other states). However, due to the pluralistic internal fabric of the polity, and because of the presence of antagonistic interest-groups, which engage in distributive and hegemonic struggles over power, the statist project and the harmony it attempts to project is also, at any given time, exposed to the continuous strain of recomposing pressures. *Thirdly*, societies aren't composed by an aggregation of pre-configured units, but instead by complex sets of intra- and inter-group relations. A political entity such as the state is no ontologically independent *black box* that could assume the status of a reality outside of its constitutive relational matrix - on the contrary: the concept of the 'state' is the name given to the vast numbers of emerging material and ideational connections whose constitutive interplay forms such an agentic force in the first place. Proudhon notes that "every realization, in society and in nature, results from the combination of opposed elements and their movement"⁴¹⁶, which implies that social agents and political concepts alike are expressions of transactions and productive exchange, rather than pre-configured essences.

Becoming, antinomy, and relationally highlight the contradictory and dynamic nature of socio-political phenomena, but only a second set of terms, *compositions* and *conceptions*, can shed light on the emergence of such arrangements.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 14.

Philosophy of Progress draws a nuanced picture of an anti-essentialist condition, characterized by deep ontological anarchy. Substantialist markers of essence and linearity are replaced with assumptions about uncertainty, movement, and transformation. Yet, the non-foundational ‘eternal dance’ is far from arbitrary or chaotic, despite its potential randomness. Rather than evaporating into thin air movement is regularized in a variety of relational patterns which facilitate the emergence of socio-political *compositions*. Compositions are the result of movement in the widest possible sense, and encompass any productive or reproductive social operation, such as generating value through acts of labour in the economic realm, or competitions over power in the political sphere. Compositions are inevitably relational and must be perceived as performative socio-political acts: “Thus, every intuition or sensible idea is the apperception of a composition, and is itself a composition: now, every composition, whether it exists in nature or results from an operation of the mind, is the product of a movement”.⁴¹⁷ Towards that end compositions are strictly immanent products of relationality, and count - to appropriate the words of Hardt and Negri - as an “affirmation of the powers of this world”.⁴¹⁸ The compositional surface upon which the ‘eternal dance’ is celebrated is then first and foremost an immanent plane, populated and occupied by a heterogeneous variety of actors, each of which contributing to the composition of the ‘common’ through their collaborative and relational acts of socio-political labor.⁴¹⁹

Compositions form an ontological fabric and replace substantiality for relationality, but they depend, in order to be realized and recognized, on their framing through a set of *conceptions*. Society works and acts through such conceptions, which provide for an analysis of movement by reducing the compositional complexity of a deep, relational ontology to a set of conceivable, thinkable, recognizable intervals. While compositions are the products of

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 18.

⁴¹⁸ Hardt & Negri, *Empire*, 71.

⁴¹⁹ Hardt & Negri, *Multitude*, 94 f.

movement, conceptions analyze and represent movement.⁴²⁰ This representational function of conceptions makes them derivative to compositions, since they only represent and analyzes movement. Yet, conceptions also fulfill a constitutive and productive function by means of providing for a series of signifiers, through which infinitely complex compositions can be conceived and experienced. Towards that end conceptions function as pieces of social imagination by representing and depicting movement *as if* it were static: “But it is always a relation illegitimately transformed into reality: there is not, in the universe, a first and second, or last cause; there is only one single current existence”.⁴²¹ The co-constitutive tension between productive compositions and representational conceptions serves not only as a core element of a deeply anarchic ontology, but exposes, in addition, one of the central conflicts in modern political thought.

Modern politics is characterized by pervasive modes of representations, attempting to mediated and capture the immanent forces of relational agency. In the domestic realm parliaments and governments act on behalf of ‘the people’ from whom they receive their mandate. International affairs works through a variety of representational channels, and privileges inter-governmental and diplomatic exchange over alternative, non-representational courses of political action. And even transnational activism relies on NGOs and high-profile individuals that must speak on behalf of an otherwise indeterminate global civil society. Such modes of representation are widely accepted traits and seem to naturally underpin modern politics. Yet, far from being accidental or coincidental, they constitute an inherent feature of dialectical Enlightenment philosophy. Modernity is not only characterized by the discovery of an immanent, and potentially democratic momentum, but is also ridden by omnipresent and recurring attempts to capture these very forces by means of mobilizing transcendental and representational political mechanism.⁴²²

⁴²⁰ Proudhon, *The Philosophy of Progress*, 18.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴²² Hardt & Negri, *Empire*, 70.

2.2 Anarchic ontologies: groups, all the way down

The contradictory and co-constitutive relation between compositions and conceptions plants ‘deep anarchy’ into the heart of the political process and establishes productive foundationlessness as a prerequisite for meaningful collective action. Compositions make social life in general, and politics in particular, tangible. Yet, the relations they form are only latently productive and attain the status of a conceivable reality only if they work through conceptions - conceptions give meaning to compositions. These conceptions are, due to the condition of ontological anarchy, necessarily artificial, synthetic, and antinomic: “The antinomic dualism, reduced by the equation or fusion of the two terms into one, produces the synthetic and true idea, the synthesis (...)”⁴²³ - a position that leads Proudhon to the conclusion that all of social life is based upon representative conceptions which *group* productive compositions together. In the same way conceptions give meaning to composition on an ontological level, social or ‘natural groups’ (hereafter referred to as ‘groups’) give meaning to an otherwise indeterminate relationality in the political realm. And while ontological conceptions are opposed to substance, social groups stand in opposition to contentions of political absolutism: “From the idea of being, conceived as group, I deduce, by one sole and single argument, this double proposition: that the simplistic, immutable, infinite, eternal and absolute god of the metaphysicians, not becoming is not and *cannot be*; while the social being, which is grouped, organized, perfectible, progressive, and which by its essence always becomes, *is*”.⁴²⁴ Compositions and conceptions, emerging from the productive void of deep anarchy, are similar to those social or natural groups that harvest the generative potential of immanent social labor. All politics is, in consequence, politics among natural groups - groups that need to be understood as proto-politics and social embryos of varying kinds and sizes.

From a groups-perspective politics cannot be reduced to macro-level representational processes, but denotes first and foremost a series of productive

⁴²³ Proudhon, *The Philosophy of Progress*, 35.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.* - emphasis added.

and reproductive proceedings, which encompass all quarters of social existence, and transgress the boundaries of the social, the political, or the economic. Any human collective – a family, a workshop, a battalion, or a state⁴²⁵ - qualifies as a natural group as long as it is involved in generative or reproductive acts of social labor. The underpinning identities of such arrangements are heterogenous and variant, and fluctuate with the size and the quality of the collective. In its most basic sense a group forms the precondition for social and political action and conveys, due to its appearance as an essentially collective phenomenon, a sense of sameness and solidarity. Certain groups, like a subject-specific protest march may dissolve quickly after the end of the rally and instigate low levels of sameness and solidarity. Other, more universal and durable arrangements, possess the capacity to provide for thick accounts of collective self-understanding (i.e. through national or civic identities) and solidarity (i.e. the provision of public goods and services, or a sense of self-hood and responsibility). All groups are, regardless of the level of coherence they expose, and due to their status as conceptions, synthetic and antinomic, and as such in a permanent state of dissolution and becoming.⁴²⁶ States serve as examples in that regard: they are groups of a higher order, while comprising themselves of an assemblage of subordinate natural groups. A state-group is an actual, politically active phenomenon because of the constitutive and productive relations (compositions) it harbors, yet it is also fictitious and synthetic due to the fact that it acts upon an arbitrary interruption of social relationality (the state acts as a conception in that regard).⁴²⁷ In order to understand the operational logic of a state-group one needs to pay attention to the relations among its constitutive parts. A state is then first and foremost a set of relations, processes, and configurations that work, actively or passively, towards the realization of a state-group.

⁴²⁵ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, “Kleiner Politischer Katechismus”, in *Die Gerechtigkeit in der Revolution und in der Kirche* (Hamburg: Otto Meißner, 1858), 524.

⁴²⁶ Rogers Brubaker, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, *Social Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 7 f.

⁴²⁷ Proudhon, “Kleiner Politischer Katechismus”, 524.

Despite the republican bottom-up mechanism that underpins the formation of collective agencies, groups are not democratic or emancipatory by default. Drawing from Spinoza's concept of crowds Rogers-Cooper notes that multitudes often harbor the potential for latent violence, and are occasionally driven by accounts of infuriated passion – an assumption shared by Schmitt, for whom the statist monopoly of deciding on the friend-enemy-divide is a crucial mechanism of crowd-control via affective means (the sovereign absorbs and governs the otherwise erratic passions of the multitude by generating love for the state and hate for the enemy).⁴²⁸ In a similar vein Brubaker remarks that political entrepreneurs can mobilize certain categories (i.e. nationality, race, faith, or ethnicity) and use them as a backdrop for substantialist ethno- and identity-politics.⁴²⁹ Simplified views on political and social group-formation lead towards a 'groupist' social ontology and essentializes/naturalizes otherwise synthetic and relational identities. Groupism denotes "the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogenous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis".⁴³⁰ As such it neglects other forms of affinity, communality, connectedness, and collective action, and furthers a possessive, groupist individualism by means of operating from the *assumption* (both analytically and normatively) that collectivities can assume the form of homogenous, unitary, and externally bounded entities.⁴³¹ The anarchist approach to political agency undermines such substantialist and groupist takes on social action, and draws a picture of the collective as a "contextually fluctuating conceptual variable", characterized by productive processuality and configurative practices. This more general account of 'groupness'⁴³², coupled with a specifically

⁴²⁸ Justin Rogers-Cooper, "Crowds and Spinoza's Concept of the Political", *Meditations - Journal of the Marxist Literary Group* 25, no. 2 (2011): 42 ff.

⁴²⁹ Brubaker, "Beyond 'Identity'", 4 f.

⁴³⁰ Rogers Brubaker, "Ethnicity without groups", *European Journal of Sociology* XLII, no. 2 (2002): 164; and Rogers Brubaker, "Neither individualism nor 'groupism'. A reply to Craig Calhoun", *Ethnicities* 3, no. 4 (2003): 553.

⁴³¹ Brubaker, "Neither individualism nor 'groupism'", 555.

⁴³² *Ibid.*

anarchist framing of compositions, conceptions, and natural groups, puts a major emphasis on the underlying processes of *being grouped* and *being synthetic*, while acting collaboratively and in concert with others. The relational character of natural groups as entities of *becoming* alludes, furthermore, to the performative aspect of *group-making* as an ongoing project. Groupness affirms the performative character of socio-political arrangements and highlights their qualities as discursively constructed, summoned entities.⁴³³ The process of group-making involves, as already pointed out above, the transformation of compositions and relations into conceptions of a higher order.⁴³⁴ Hence it is applicable to think of groups as “practical categories, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects, and contingent events”⁴³⁵, capturing society’s immanent productiveness, and turning it into loci of political agency. This process also sheds light on the artificial nature of collaborative arrangements which are, despite their synthetic character, not less of a political reality than the individual political agents they comprise of.⁴³⁶ Connectedness, communality, and groupness mount a convincing critique against a methodological individualism which overemphasizes the political impact of aggregative micro-level processes.⁴³⁷ Thatcher once famously proclaimed “There is no such thing as society”⁴³⁸ - what an odd thing to say for a political operative whose power derives solely from its recognition and situatedness within a system of processual relations that depends on the realization of a synthetic ‘society’-concept. Thatcher commits to an anthropomorphic fallacy and treats society *as if* it were a person. Society is not a person, it is concept, a group of a higher order – and as such it is very real.

⁴³³ Brubaker, “Ethnicity without groups”, 166.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 170 f.

⁴³⁵ Brubaker, “Neither individualism nor ‘groupism’”, 555; and further: Brubaker, “Ethnicity without groups”, 167.

⁴³⁶ Brubaker, “Neither individualism nor ‘groupism’”, 556 f.

⁴³⁷ Brubaker, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, 20; and Brubaker, “Neither individualism nor ‘groupism’”, 556.

⁴³⁸ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, *Interview for Woman’s Own*, September 23, 1987, <http://www.margarethatcher.org/document/106689>.

2.3 Capillaries of force: a different type of power politics

Political conduct in general, and international politics in particular, is first and foremost politics among natural groups. International affairs, as a distinct set of relations, are produced and reproduced predominantly through the interplay of heterogeneous groups that vary in size, quality, and internal coherence. The international as a political space cannot claim ontological independence, but is rather a conception in itself: the name given to bundles of compositions and processes involved in the production of a series of global political outcomes. It appears then, first and foremost, as an assemblage of immanent (proto-) polities, of whom only some assume the form of states. The upcoming section *three* will elaborate further on the implications and the broader trajectories of such a polycentric perspective for IR theory in general, and the ontological standing of the international in particular. It will be argued that paying greater attention to relationality and group-formation initiates a shift away from substantialist and statist narratives of international politics, towards a processual framing of a grouped, global political realm. Yet, before considering such potential consequences it is necessary to establish a firmer bond between the advanced anarchist perspective and the processual-relational approach discussed towards the end of section *one*. It will become evident that anarchist group ontologies do not only shed light on the emergence of 'the global' through processes and configurations, but are also capable of alluding to patterns of productive and constituent power-relations in international affairs.

Substantialist IR theories with their static ontologies convey an exchange-based image of power in international affairs and highlight the distributive effects of inter-state politics. Meaningful international political action is reduced to foreign policy initiatives and to an exchange of force between pre-constituted Westphalian polities. The writings of Morgenthau and Mearsheimer serve as examples in that regard. Morgenthau defines politics as a purposeful activity whose primary objective consists in the amassment of power. While other fractions of society might be interested in questions of profitability (economics), beauty (aesthetics), or the good life (philosophy), politics occupies itself first and

foremost with a quest for resources of domination: “The main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of *interest defined in terms of power*”.⁴³⁹ Power, in that regard, obtains a very specific function and serves as a tool aimed at controlling and manipulating “the minds and actions of other men [sic]”.⁴⁴⁰ Against this backdrop Morgenthau develops a model of ‘national power’ and defines the means for domination in more detail. States compete in a leaderless environment and must develop assets such as geopolitical location (geography, access to natural resources), material capabilities (industrial base, military preparedness, population and demographics), ideational and ideological factors (national character and national morale), and procedural arrangements (quality of diplomacy, quality of government)⁴⁴¹ for their own good and in order to further their chances of survival within the confinements of a self-help system. Individual aspirations for regional domination, as well as system-wide strives over hegemony, are checked and balanced through the actions of competitors across the anarchic realm.⁴⁴² ‘National powers’ balance against competing ‘national powers’, either by means of direct opposition or competition⁴⁴³, and employ different strategies and methods, i.e. divide and rule, compensations, armaments, or alliances⁴⁴⁴ towards that end. Realist power politics is portrayed as a predominantly distributive activity whose primary concern is the obtainment of ‘scoring points’ in an environment of pre-configured, clashing, and competing Westphalian polities.

Mearsheimer’s offensive realism falls into the very same category of unproductive, merely distributive power politics. “Great powers” he argues “are always searching for opportunities to gain power over their rivals, with hegemony as their final goal”.⁴⁴⁵ The lack of a centralized ordering force in international affairs breeds uncertainty among units and encourages them to take things in

⁴³⁹ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 5 - emphasis added.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Part Three.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 179.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 184 ff.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 190 ff.

⁴⁴⁵ Mearsheimer, *The tragedy of Great Power politics*, 29.

their own hands for the purpose of ensuring their survival (defined as maintaining territorial integrity and the autonomy of the domestic sphere).⁴⁴⁶ Maximizing relative power and investing in military capabilities is the most effective way of providing for one's security: "The stronger a state is relative to its potential rivals, the less likely it is that any of those rivals will attack it and threaten its survival".⁴⁴⁷ States are primarily concerned with the distribution of power-resources among them and focus chiefly on the maximization of relative gains. Rather than maintaining the system's endogenous balance, great powers strive to unsettle this balance and aim at tilting it in their favour. The mechanisms employed for the realization of such projects vary, but comprise typically of economic, diplomatic, and military means. Overall power politics has a strong material focus and is underpinned by a zero-sum-logic.

Substantialist IR theories further an exchange-based model of power politics in which meaningful foreign policy action appears first and foremost as a transaction, an exchange of force, between *a priori* established units, competing with one another over resources and domination in an essentially leaderless realm. Realist narratives of power politics emphasize the distribution of crucial resources within and across a relatively closed international system, and perceive of power as a commodity, a 'thing', that can be owned, deployed, or wielded for the purpose of furthering the state's national interest. From an anarchist group-perspective it is in fact agreeable to portray politics as an activity revolving around varying accounts of power. Yet, it is also necessary to make an important qualification in regards to the quality of power that underpins such politics. While substantialist and state-centric approaches are primarily concerned with the distribution of capabilities across units, anarchist group-perspectives pull away from distributive questions and convey instead an image of constitutive power politics. Proudhon remarks that compositions and relations, and the deriving conceptions and groups, constitute power-relations of a specific kind, namely a *collective force* (c.f. chapter V). Natural groups do not simply wield power, but are

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 30 f.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 33.

also products of power themselves, since their act-capacity as a *collective force* depends in turn on the individual and immanent forces of their constituting parts:

*To speak here only of human collectivities, let us suppose that the individuals, in such numbers as one might wish, in whatever manner and to whatever end, group their forces: the resultant of these agglomerated forces, which must not be confused with their sum, constitutes the force or power of the group.*⁴⁴⁸

And further:

*(...) all these collectivities, more or less skillfully organised, contain power, a power which is synthetic and consequently specific to the group, superior in quality and energy to the sum of the elementary forces which compose it.*⁴⁴⁹

This mechanism of group-formation and the emergence of *collective force* has already been addressed earlier in the context of Jackson's and Nexon's take on processual relationalism (p/r). P/r portraits relations among actors as productive in themselves since they give rise to the emergence of configurations and projects which were defined as "(...) configuration[s] with agent properties" and "social entit[ies] with the ability to make choices and exercise causal power".⁴⁵⁰ From such a perspective it is difficult to envisage the international as a smooth Westphalian surface on which statist 'billiard balls' simply crash into one another. The international appears instead as a capillary web of collective forces and productive power politics. Group-ontologies direct IR's analytical focus away from an assessment of distributive politics (the simple exchange of force between pre-constituted units), towards an investigation into the capillaries of force at the heart of constitutive and productive practices in global affairs - i.e. how configurations and projects emerge in the first place, how they are sustained, and how they transform over time.

⁴⁴⁸ Proudhon, "Little Political Catechism", 655.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Jackson & Nexon, "Relations before States", 307.

3. Conclusion: from international to global

What are the contributions of anarchist political thought and group-based ontologies to IR-theory? By means of a conclusion this chapter offers two answers to this question: one analytical, the other normative.

3.1 Multi-polity-perspectives and the topography of world politics

Group-based ontologies acknowledge the continuing importance of the territorial state (after all a group of a higher order) without giving priority to statist ontologies. The modern state's perseverance and resilience has already been recognized in the introductory section, and it would be unwise and analytically unwarranted to deny or neglect the fundamental impact states have on the production of global political outcomes. Yet, it has also been highlighted that a reduction of international political dynamics to inter-state relations facilitates a distorted view about productive agency in global affairs. Group- and process based ontologies shift the analytical focus away from questions of capability-distribution among system units, towards a different kind of power-analysis, and investigates into the question of "who or what influences or controls what in global politics - and why?"⁴⁵¹ Such processual polity-framings expose a heightened susceptibility towards 'spheres of authority': identities, patterns of institutionalization, and degrees of hierarchies among individuals and groups that co-exist, cooperate, merge, clash, or split in a climate of latently governing authorities.⁴⁵² Attempts to grasp the internal dynamics of such arrangements must pay attention to the relatedness, connectedness, and distribution of loyalty in and among distinct groups. The distribution of capabilities among states results in various forms of polarities among them, whereas a group-centric post-international perspective focuses instead on sets of heterogenous polities,

⁴⁵¹ Yale H. Ferguson & Richard W. Mansbach, "Post-internationalism and IR Theory", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 3 (2007): 539.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 536 f.

grouped around particular issues and interests, while being held together by varying degrees of ideational and material connectedness.⁴⁵³

Such shifts in perspective are necessary in order to account for changes on the ground, induced by processes of economic globalization, transnational social change, and governmentalization. The post-Cold War era has seen a staggering transformation away from the bi-polarity of the bloc confrontation towards an institutionally pluralized system of overlapping, intertwining, and crosscutting politico-economic processes.⁴⁵⁴ “This system”, Cerny notes, “is being restructured into a complex, functionally differentiated, but increasingly integrated range of multilayered structures and multi-nodal processes, linking state and non-state actors across and within sectors and issue areas – above, below and cutting across state borders”.⁴⁵⁵ The resulting transformation, away from the Westphalian *raison d’etat* towards a globalized *raison du monde*⁴⁵⁶ exposes the scalearity of world politics and the ‘durable disorder’ inherent to archipelago-style forms of governance.⁴⁵⁷ The clear cut, discrete categories of substantialist IR, with their public/private, domestic/foreign, order/anarchy divisions, and the lump concept of agency that places states, corporations, and NGO’s on top of a sovereign framework, runs into immense difficulties when actors start to behave atypically and outside their assigned role. Shadian exemplifies this point with her analysis of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). The ICC serves as an example for indigenous sovereignty and acts as such much like a traditional, territorial state. It occupies a space of dependence, while its ability to exercise political power and control depends significantly on its attachment to physical territory.⁴⁵⁸ Yet, the ICC also acts and appears at times as an NGO, as a business, and it has its own collective history⁴⁵⁹ - hence it also occupies a space of engagement and

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 542 f.

⁴⁵⁴ Cerny, “Reframing the International”, 10.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁵⁸ Jessica Shadian, “From states to politics: Reconceptualizing sovereignty through Inuit governance”, *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 3 (2010): 494.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 486.

fulfills a cultural, economic, and social function.⁴⁶⁰ A-typical polities such as the ICC elude the grip of fixed categorizations, what makes it hard to account for their actions and explain the impact they have on global political dynamics. As a state-like entity the ICC would be primarily interested in maximizing its security, while its business-side might have an interest in the maximization of profit via the facilitation of trade agreements. The ICC's NGO-side is possibly keen on acting as a lobby-organization and a norm-entrepreneur for indigenous concerns, with only secondary interests in matters of either security or profit.

The puzzle appears, despite its complexity and alleged incoherence, less staggering if framed through an anarchist group narrative. Groups comprise, as already mentioned earlier, of subordinate conceptions themselves and form, by virtue of their collaborative efforts, conglomerates of a higher order. Such groups of a higher order must expose a certain degree of homogeneity for the purpose of acting collectively (from a p/r standpoint they must form a project), yet, they're also internally contradictory and inherently antinomic. Against this backdrop it makes little sense to conceive of the ICC as a substance, because it would have to fall in either of the pre-configured and pre-constituted categories of state, business, or non-state-actor. The situation becomes clearer, however, once one perceives of the ICC as a *collective force* which acquires its power from the sets of constitutive relations of its constituent parts (individuals and groups alike). The ICC is as a conception a natural group itself, and as such a representation of indigenous life. Its artificiality makes it prone to internal inconsistencies (a project of becoming and permanent making), exemplified by its diverging identities as state, a business, and an interest group. Yet, it appears none the less as a relatively coherent political agent - a phenomenon of groupness - with the ability to generate, mobilize, and wield patterns of collective force. The strength of the anarchist approach lies in its ability to make sense of such seemingly incoherent agencies and explain their effectiveness in a scalar environment of 'durable disorder'.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 494.

3.2 Natural groups, ‘the other’, and the virtues of micro-politics

Besides their incapacity to account for the effects of a-typical groupness, substantialist approaches to IR give rise to a second, more implicit, and mainly normative problem, as they convey a narrative of fear and construct an image of “dangerous ontologies” (for a detailed discussion see chapter VIII).⁴⁶¹ The realist paradigm ultimately rests on the liberal assumption of the autonomy-seeking human being transplanted into the statist realm.⁴⁶² Such individualist connotations, coupled with the substantialist claim of a supposedly homogenous and sealed-off polity, fixes identities and interests prematurely, and reduces the motivation behind state action to either survival or conquest. The state is portrayed *as if* it were a bound entity, fully equipped with a will and a purpose: namely to survive, to preserve, to fend-off external threats.⁴⁶³ The security dilemma, and the absence of guarantees and certainty in a leaderless inter-state realm, translates this methodological (and normative) individualism into a fierce competition for power, and it reduces depictions of the international to maps portraying the distribution of capabilities among state-units.⁴⁶⁴ Apart from the already addressed problems arising from portraying the state as a sealed-off black box it is also questionable whether the primary motivation behind social action in general can be reduced to mere self-preservation (regardless of its location in the domestic and international sphere). Such narratives typically arise from particularly substantialist discourses on human nature: Morgenthau, Schmitt, and others point towards an alleged *animus dominandi* - an urge to dominate - which is supposedly hard-wired to human consciousness and necessitates the demarcation of the political plane along the lines of friend/enemy, inside/outside, us/them patterns. ‘The other’ as an existential threat is by no means a default position though, and it is up for contestation whether anxiety, not all-embracing fear,

⁴⁶¹ Louiza Odysseos, “Dangerous ontologies: the ethos of survival and ethical theorizing in International Relations”, *Review of International Studies* 28 (2002): 403 ff.

⁴⁶² Felix Berenskoetter, “Friends, There Are No Friends? An Intimate Reframing of the International”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 3 (2007): 653.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, 649.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 652.

serves as the main driver of social action.⁴⁶⁵ Natural-groups-perspectives help to diffuse the allure of ontological danger and offer an alternative image of ‘the other’ as a constitutive outside. Rather than departing from the assumption of self-preservation, they highlight other behavioral traits, such as the search for companionship which is designed to control and mitigate anxieties.⁴⁶⁶ Flares of violence, the possibility of ‘the other’ turning into an existential threat, are still acknowledged as powerful motivators behind social action - they get, however, stripped from their ontologically central status. Rather than starting from an assumptions about the omnipresence of physical threats, which necessitate the formation of strategic alliances for the purpose of survival⁴⁶⁷, group-perspectives emphasize the plethora of motivations that underpin human political conduct - most of which are not realized by violent means.

The existence of durable and deeply ingrained demarcations between political communities and actors is central to realist approaches to IR-theory and ontology. Anarchism, on the other side, refuses to succumb to such substantialist and groupist reflexes by means of not only avoiding ‘the decision’ upon such demarcations, but by explicitly deciding against it. This “anti-decision decision”⁴⁶⁸ departs from the assumption that statist politics relies indeed on the development of firmly established patterns of political separateness.⁴⁶⁹ Such delineations are, however, not universally constitutive of politics, but represent instead a quite specific Westphalian approach to political conduct, and is designed to permanently entrench the relations among territorial units. ‘Anti-decision decisions’ serves as a pretext to anti- or micro-politics, due to its refusal of engaging in substantialist and representational forms of social action.⁴⁷⁰ Yet, far from dissolving in a normative or ethical vacuum, the rejection of foundational politics and practices leads towards the emergence of enlarged spaces for

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 655.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 656.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Newman, “Crowned Anarchy”, 277.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 263.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 277.

politicization: “This weakening of ground may lead to the increasing acceptance of the contingency and historicity of being, which potentially has a liberating effect”.⁴⁷¹ Micro- and anti-politics in general, and anarchist politics in particular, emphasize the virtues of technical, political, and social self-determination, while simultaneously cultivating pragmatic conceptions of agency in inter-related systems of interdependencies.⁴⁷² A normative commitment towards anarchist accounts of groupness serves as an effective vehicle for the trans-border provision of public goods in international affairs, most notably of democratic practices between ‘natural groups’.

⁴⁷¹ Oliver Marchart, *Post-foundational Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 156 f.

⁴⁷² Brent Steele, “Revisiting Classical Functional Theory: Towards A Twenty-First Century Micro-Politics”, *Journal of International Political Theory* 7, no. 1 (2011): 18.

CHAPTER SEVEN

VII | RECLAIMING SOVEREIGNTY

1. Introduction: anarchic ontologies and the future of sovereignty

Chapter VI put the emergence of ‘the global’ in the context of a process-oriented, anarchist approach to ontology, and paid particular attention to natural-group-formation and anarchist ‘power politics’. Furthermore the topographies of global politics were discussed, and assessed in combination with the normative implications of micro-politics. Chapter VII will now utilize the created conceptual space and build on the idea of a foundation-less, process-driven ontology of ‘the global’.

This chapter assesses the implications of process-driven ontologies for what is perhaps one of the most central concepts of modern political thought: the institution of sovereignty. The chapter aims to ‘reclaim’ sovereign practices from the conceptually hegemonic state-form, and to re-assess the nature of sovereign agency in world politics. It departs from the assumption that the image of a foundationless ontology (chapter VI) requires a corresponding, equally dynamic agentic figure, capable of navigating an essentially fluid and contingent political terrain. Sections *two* and *three* hence present challenges to Westphalian governance and discuss the nature of state-based sovereignty. Section *four*

establishes a firm link between sovereign practices and the already known theme of constituent power. The central parts of this chapter, sections *five* and *six*, develop the motif of anarchist sovereignty, and put so-called *porous sovereignty* in the context of Westphalian practices, biopolitical agency, and republican political principles.

2. Challenges to Westphalian governance

The institution of sovereignty - that is the assumption that legitimacy in international affairs is denoted by an assemblage of territorially defined authority-structures, supreme internally and autonomous internationally - is regarded as one of the *Grundnormen* of international affairs, and as an institution upon which the society of states ultimately rests.⁴⁷³ Formally, sovereignty is accepted as a nearly universal ordering principle. A glance at a political world map suffices and one will understand immediately that the global political landscape is depicted in the shape of a universal Westphalian polity. Statist agents exalt a virtually hegemonic influence which is also mirrored by the grand political projects of the past 150 years: 19th century efforts of European nation building, mid-20th century waves of decolonization, and late 20th century examples of state building in the Balkans, the Middle East, and Sub-Sahara Africa.⁴⁷⁴ Yet, upon taking a closer look at this supposedly smooth Westphalian surface, cracks and irregularities appear. State sovereignty as a mechanism to regulate the circulation of violence⁴⁷⁵ in domestic and international realms works particularly well in certain political contexts, but leads to diametral effects in others. Regulating force through statist practices succeeds in Western and European societies - which negotiated the terms of sovereignty from the 16th century onwards and forged a specifically political notion of the concept that was inextricably tied to the rise of the

⁴⁷³ Stephen D. Krasner, *Power, the State, and Sovereignty* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009): 180; and Paul Taylor, "The United Nations in the 1990s: Proactive Cosmopolitanism and the Issue of Sovereignty", *Political Studies* XLVII (1999): 142 ff.

⁴⁷⁴ Christopher Clapham, "Sovereignty and the Third World State", *Political Studies* XLVII (1999): 522 ff.

⁴⁷⁵ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 102 ff.

modern territorial state.⁴⁷⁶ A number of non-European societies, former empires - such as Japan, Turkey, China - and colonial dependencies - for example Brazil and India - adopted well and swiftly to the Westphalian ways of arranging inter-polity relations. Yet, a third category of political communities, quasi-states according to Jackson,⁴⁷⁷ exposes great difficulties in coping with the requirements of Westphalian statism. An ever growing body of literature on fragile or failing states bolsters this notion.⁴⁷⁸

The promise of Westphalia - the effective regulation of violence through a division of the political plane into domestic and international political spaces - has failed to materialize. Instead of effectively managing force on a global scale, the Westphalian standard pacifies only certain societies, while insufficiently containing conflict in others. Adding insult to injury, these societies are routinely marked with the label 'failed states'. Such discourses on state failure expose the conceptual inability of recognizing the existence of mechanisms for the regulation of violence that operate outside of the statist logic. Not societies who failed to adopt to the Westphalian model ought to be problematized, but rather an intrusive account of sovereignty that conceptualizes political authority-structures through an exclusively statist lens. Certain societies might have 'failed' as states, but not as polities per se. Historically they have often developed alternative socio-political coping mechanisms and regulate political intercourse by non-statist means. Nomadic peoples, tribal- and village-structures, diasporas, urban communities, etc. are incompatible with the statist model, mainly due to their non-reliance on territorial accounts of rule and their ability to tolerate overlapping and intertwining authority-structures. Yet, they could still be mobilized effectively for the regulation of violence and the the management of political affairs by non-statist means. What is required for such a mobilization is a

⁴⁷⁶ Robert Jackson, *Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 49 f.; and Wouter Werner & Jaap De Wilde, "The Endurance of Sovereignty", *European Journal of International Relations* 7, 3 (2001): 286 f.

⁴⁷⁷ Robert Jackson, *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: University Press, 1990).

⁴⁷⁸ Daron Acemoglu & James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2012).

new authority consensus capable of doing justice to the agentic heterogeneity inherent to world politics. The political reality of the 21st century is neither that of a homogenous Westphalian republic, nor is it accurately described by Friedman's flat-world analogy which portrays the globe as a structurally unified realm.⁴⁷⁹ The global's ontology must instead be comprehended as comprising of socio-political topographies and polities of varying scales - a landscape scattered with cliffs and archipelagos, planes, caves, and no-mans lands in which "international politics works as an increasingly complex institutional and behavioural superstructure crisscrossing with both domestic politics, domestic and transnational society, and sub-units of states".⁴⁸⁰

This chapter suggests that such a new authority-consensus must emerge from within prevalent debates about sovereignty. It problematizes Westphalian interpretations of sovereignty in global politics and works towards its analytical re-conceptualization alongside the lines of anarchist accounts of agency. Sovereign practices can indeed serve as an important platform for global political action by means of providing accounts of democratic accountability and oversight. Yet, it must be conceptually couched in a normative context that moves beyond Westphalian forms of rule. By means of deploying anarchist accounts of constituent power, the chapter proposes to conceive of a sovereign political momentum beyond the conceptually hegemonic horizon of the Westphalian agent. Amalgamating anarchism with sovereignty on a global level disentangles the state-sovereignty-nexus and draws attention to the constituent qualities of non-foundational sovereign practices. The political space that emerges at this intersection of constituent anarchist power and post-Westphalian sovereignty facilitates the emergence of democratic agentic forces in international affairs. The aim of the Westphalian project of state sovereignty was to denote the conditions for legitimate political action in *international* affairs. The aim of a post-Westphalian project of anarchist sovereignty is to denote the conditions for legitimate political action in *global* affairs. Such a project must recognize and work with the partially

⁴⁷⁹ Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat* (New York: Farrar, Straus und Giroux, 2005).

⁴⁸⁰ Cerny, "Reframing the International", 15.

statist reality of international politics, while acknowledging the political capacity of polities that exist above and below a statist threshold. A post-Westphalian take on sovereignty displaces and rephrases the authority-condition. In a Westphalian reading, a polity has political authority if it displays statist properties (a government, control over territory and citizens). In a post-Westphalian reading, a polity has political authority if it displays anarchic qualities (being organized in accordance to the principle of non-domination). A non-statist authority consensus is agonistic towards form and focuses instead on principles. This allows for an institutional pluralism and admits polities and political associations into the global political sphere that are disregarded under a statist regime.

3. Crisis and genesis: the rise of state sovereignty

The emergence of sovereignty as an institution can be traced back to a crisis of religious authority during the Renaissance. Up until then political authority in Europe was characterized by a hierarchical and vertically organized imperial structure, co-headed by emperor and pope, representing supreme political and supreme clerical authority respectively. In the medieval *Respublica Christiana* secular discourses of authority overlapped significantly with theological notions of redemption and salvation within a universal Christian commonwealth.⁴⁸¹ From the 14th century onwards wealthy and powerful Italian city states, notably Florence, Venice, and Sienna, began dismantling the straightjacket of theological determinisms that captured the political by means of making it answerable to a sacred, extra-political, godly source of legitimacy.⁴⁸² Sovereignty was not part of the political vocabulary of the time yet, but the “autonomy of the political sphere”,⁴⁸³ as Morgenthau put it, has been eclipsed and the *raison d’etat* began to assert itself against sacred rationalities and god’s will. Born out of the dialectic between sacred and secular assumptions of authority the institution of sovereignty continued to be shaped by crisis: the Peace of

⁴⁸¹ Jackson, *Sovereignty*, 33 f.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 41 f.

⁴⁸³ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 13.

Augsburg (1555 - affirming the king's supreme authority in religious matters, the *cujus regio ejus religio*), the Peace of Westphalia (1648 - introducing the removal of the papacy's political authority from the domestic realm), and the Peace of Utrecht (1713 - confirming the balance of power among European states), to name just a few, forged a specifically political notion of sovereignty that was inextricably tied to the rise of the modern territorial state.⁴⁸⁴ Fast forwarding into the 20th century one cannot but notice that even the emergence of what has grown into the European Union fits into the pattern of crisis that continues to mold the institution of sovereignty. Confronted with the devastating effects of two consecutive world wars the European society of states decided, once again, to renegotiate the terms of political authority upon which it is founded. The result is a partly intergovernmental, partly supranational political entity in which traditional multilateralism coexists with emerging patterns of supranational sovereignty.⁴⁸⁵

3.1 Political sovereignty as hypothetical authority

In the contemporary study of international politics sovereignty is recognized as one of the *Grundnormen* of international affairs.⁴⁸⁶ The concept is, despite its centrality to international affairs, not free from ambiguity and changes its appearance and meaning, depending on the specific analytical context into which it is inserted: comparative politics defines sovereignty as a degree of absolute or nearly absolute control within a given territory; liberal perspectives highlight the sovereign's ability to exercise control over trans-border movements; for international legal scholars it bestows agents, particularly states, with the ability to enter reciprocally binding agreements; IR theorists highlight its Westphalian interpretation and the attached right of states to territorial autonomy.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁴ Jackson, *Sovereignty*, 49 f.

⁴⁸⁵ Sørensen, "Sovereignty: Change and Continuity in a Fundamental Institution", 180 f.

⁴⁸⁶ Robert Jackson, "Sovereignty in World Politics: a Glance at the Conceptual and Historical Landscape", *Political Studies* XLVII (1990): 432.

⁴⁸⁷ Stephen D. Krasner, "Compromising Westphalia", *International Security* 20, no. 3 (1995): 118 f.

Its ambiguous appearance aside, the institution of sovereignty is inseparably tied to the existence of authority structures in international affairs. Political sovereignty in general, and state-based sovereignty in particular, are widely conceived of as a *hypothetical* form of authority (ideational) vice versa *actual* capacities of power (material). Only the confluence of power and legitimacy characterizes this modern notion of sovereignty. Sovereignty as an institution always remains an assumption, “an assumption about authority”⁴⁸⁸ that denotes a “distinctive way of arranging the contacts and relations of political communities”.⁴⁸⁹ Understanding sovereignty as a hypothetical form of authority instead of an actual capacity to power reveals its sociological, constitutive, and most importantly legitimizing effect on international affairs: the practice of defining who does and doesn’t count as ‘sovereign’ explicitly confers legitimacy to some actors and polities, while deliberately and explicitly withholding it from others.⁴⁹⁰ It defines, furthermore, the conditions for membership: what requirements must be fulfilled by aspiring polities if they want to become ‘sovereign’.⁴⁹¹ Last but not least sovereignty also grants certain privileges to actors and polities that have already acquired this status, i.e. the exclusive right to wage war and to exercise other forms of physical violence; the right to send diplomatic envoys and set up missions at international organizations; the right to enter reciprocally binding international agreements, and so forth.⁴⁹² In short: sovereignty as a form of hypothetical authority (or legitimate power) produces and establishes, in the widest sense, a very specific, state-based form of legal and contractual capability in international affairs that is, qua necessity and per definition, *legal*, *absolute*, and *unitary* in nature.⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁸ Jackson, “Sovereignty in World Politics”, 433.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 434.

⁴⁹⁰ Philpott, “Westphalia, Authority, and International Society”, 150.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 147 f.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 151.

⁴⁹³ Allen James, “The Practice of Sovereign Statehood in Contemporary International Society”, in *Sovereignty at the Millennium*, ed. Robert Jackson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 40 ff.

3.2 The right to death: state-based sovereignty, coercion, legalism

Krasner remarks that the contemporary practice of sovereignty in international affairs can be parsed into four analytically distinct categories: domestic, interdependence or trans-border, international legal, and finally Westphalian accounts of sovereignty.⁴⁹⁴ This particular notion of political authority in world politics generates two specific problems for the study of global political dynamics: one empirical, the other conceptual.

From an *empirical* perspective one must acknowledge that the ‘sovereign’ has never been sovereign, at least not in an absolute sense. As remarked earlier, sovereignty should be understood as hypothetical and as an assumption of how legitimate international political conduct is *supposed* to look like. Sovereignty reflects first and foremost reality as practice, not reality as actual power. Yet even as a ‘practice’ sovereignty has always been subject to contestation, precariousness, and porosity. Westphalia was and is compromised repeatedly and routinely, i.e. by conventions and contracts, but also by means of coercion and imposition.⁴⁹⁵ Rosenberg acknowledges the vulnerability of the sovereign and alludes to the structural relationship between the public political and the private political sphere. In this narrative sovereignty can never be absolute, but is conditionally depended on the synchronous co-constitution of state and market.⁴⁹⁶ Certain strands of classical realism, structural realism, and constructivism treat sovereignty *as if* it reflected a corresponding political reality. The *empirical fallacy* committed by this approaches is that they fail to grasp the essential difference between sovereignty as a hypothesis (‘practice’) and sovereignty as actual capacity (‘power’).

Another much more severe problem is of a *conceptual* nature. Sovereignty has been monopolized by the state-form, which gives rise to a striking complicity between the two concepts: states are regarded as supreme and autonomous political arrangements, hence they are acting under the premise of being sovereign. Vice versa, the sovereign can only appear in the form of the state.

⁴⁹⁴ Krasner, *Power, the State, and Sovereignty*, 180.

⁴⁹⁵ Krasner, “Compromising Westphalia”, 123.

⁴⁹⁶ Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society* (London: Verso, 1994), 123.

Other political actors might wield considerable power, i.e. economic capacity or the ability to decisively influence public discourses⁴⁹⁷, but they cannot be bestowed upon with the title ‘sovereign’. The effect of this intimate relation between the state and the practice of sovereignty is twofold: *Firstly*, the state is regarded as virtually the only polity that possesses both, the power and the legitimacy to provide certain kinds of political goods, most notably democracy. Some commentators even go as far as to announce that sovereignty and the state are the precondition for any form of modern democratic life.⁴⁹⁸ Attempts of escaping the statist logic by means of transnationalizing democratic politics have proven to be unsuccessful in that regard. David Held’s model of cosmopolitan democracy, for example, rests heavily on the notion of the liberal legal state as the locus for democratic conduct. The envisaged cosmopolitan community projects this vision onto the global political plane and delineates a *Rechtsstaat* of global proportions⁴⁹⁹ – a change in size, not in quality. *Secondly*, under the auspices of the state-sovereignty-cartel meaningful global political activity is reduced to, and descends into, foreign policy. International politics is confined to movements on a spectrum whose opposing poles are constituted by *legality* (international legal and Westphalian sovereignty) and *coercion* (trans-border and domestic sovereignty). Political action generates itself as an instrumental choice between the ‘logic of appropriateness’ and the ‘logic of consequences’, and turns into *organized hypocrisy*.⁵⁰⁰

4. Reclaiming sovereignty

4.1 Force and genesis: sovereignty as constituent power

This diagnosis begs the question whether the concept of sovereignty is perhaps inevitably lost in these extreme quarters of coercion and legalism? Is it possible to conceive of a sovereign political momentum beyond the conceptually

⁴⁹⁷ Holzscheiter, “Discourse as Capability”, 738.

⁴⁹⁸ Oisín Tansey, “Does democracy need sovereignty?”, *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 4 (2011): 1526.

⁴⁹⁹ David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 222.

⁵⁰⁰ Krasner, *Power, the State, and Sovereignty*, 19 & 180 f.

hegemonic horizon of the modern territorial state? Can one circumvent the structural complicity of appropriateness and necessity? An answer to this question must inevitably take into account the transitory relation between framings of power in international affairs, the deriving assumptions of authority and sovereignty, and finally the existence of the state as the hegemonic polity. Rethinking sovereignty in world politics requires reassessing power in international affairs by means of traversing the coercion-legalism-axis. The conception of a principal polity constituted primarily by coercive and juridical efficacy derives from an image of sovereignty that is co-constituted by these very same attributes; furthermore, it rests fundamentally on the assumption that political capacity only emerges in the context of either power politics or international law. Exposing the structural relation between sovereignty and power, as well as offering a narrative that conceptualizes the latter devoid of coercion and prior to law, is paramount for recovering sovereignty as an active political property.

The state-sovereignty-nexus as discussed so far resembles a form of *constituted power*, which represents a juridical and punitive notion of force, administering and limiting, yet incapable of acting politically beyond this point: “Constituted power (...) defines the fixed order of the constitution and the *stability* of its social structure”. And further: “History is *closed* by constituent power or, rather, the history it determines is restricted to a continual *repetition* of the same social divisions and hierarchies”.⁵⁰¹ Incarcerating democracy in the domestic realm and reducing meaningful international political action to state-led foreign policy are but two phenomena that are exemplary for the closure of history and the mechanical repetitiveness Hardt is alluding to in this definition. When paired with the paradigm of sovereignty constituent power leads inevitably into a hierarchical narrative of command and obedience in which a centralized source of supreme authority exercises its supposedly inherent ‘right’ of

⁵⁰¹ Hardt, “Three Keys to Understanding Constituent Power”, vii-viii - emphasis added.

demanding allegiance from a set of politically inferior, subordinated subjects.⁵⁰² Constituted power is hence closely associated with notions of *coercive sovereignty*.

A perspective beyond the unproductive stasis of constituted power and coercive sovereignty is provided by the complementary principle of *constituent power*, which represents the “democratic forces of *social transformation*, the means by which humans make their own history”. Hardt points out that constituent power bestows the demos with agency in the form of politically productive forces: “Machiavelli’s peoples in arms (...) animated by the power not only to rebel against and overthrow the current order but also to create from below new *democratic forms of social organization*”.⁵⁰³ By way of paying closer attention to the working of constituent power in global politics a series of novel perspectives emerges that allows for the salvaging of sovereignty from the state-form and for its conceptualization alongside democratic lines. Amalgamating constituent power and sovereignty draws attention to the productive and generative qualities of the modern *democratic* sovereign. The hitherto dominant model of coercive sovereignty gets supplemented by an alternative reading that exposes founding, positing, and constituting forces⁵⁰⁴: *productive or constitutive sovereignty*.

As soon as the question of sovereignty is examined through a *productive* lens a lacuna emerges: transnational forms of constituent power that reach beyond the conceptual hegemony of the state have not been systematically assessed in International Relations Theory and International Political Theory yet (c.f. discussion in chapter II).⁵⁰⁵ Furthermore, a broad articulation of the structural co-constitution of *constituent power* and *productive sovereignty* is largely missing in current debates that unfold around questions of transnational democratic practices. This vast absence of the *begründende Gewalt*, the ‘founding power’,⁵⁰⁶ from discourses of sovereignty and democracy alike is somewhat surprising, mainly because early modern concepts of popular rule drew

⁵⁰² Kalyvas, “Popular Sovereignty, Democracy, and the Constituent Power”, 225.

⁵⁰³ Hardt, “Three Keys to Understanding Constituent Power”, vii-viii - emphasis added.

⁵⁰⁴ Kalyvas, “Popular Sovereignty, Democracy, and the Constituent Power”, 225.

⁵⁰⁵ Patberg, “Constituent Power beyond the State”, 225.

⁵⁰⁶ Schmitt, cited in Kalyvas, “Popular Sovereignty, Democracy, and the Constituent Power”, 226 f.

extensively from constitutive forms of power and connected them to practices of popular sovereignty. Negri's studies of the Italian, the French, the American, and the Russian revolutions serve as striking examples in that regard.⁵⁰⁷ In the same vein Kalyvas argues that the modern doctrine of popular sovereignty "coincides with the conceptual advent of constituent power".⁵⁰⁸ Any contemporary study of sovereign practices should then pay attention to this alternative reading and the attached, somewhat submerged constitutive connotation.

Comprehending the decidedly productive elements as complementary to, instead of overlain by, the much more prominent and prevalent facet of coercion serves as the key paradigmatic insight in that regard. Vice versa, any theoretical attempt to delineate a model for transnational democratic practices must be susceptible to the momentum exalted by constituent forces and the productive facet of sovereignty. Sovereignty – a practice supposedly and superficially assumed to be state-centered and coercion-based – must not be evaded and circumnavigated but rather reinstated in its original productive guise. The image of a democratic multitude is important in that regard because it inserts constituent power into the context of productive sovereignty. Whereas the state-form operates on a political plane that is enclosed by force and law, multitudes as democratic agentic forces dislocate the distinct logic that guides these modern coercive sovereigns. It is particularly the attached shift from *transcendence* to *immanence* that opens up possibilities for the emergence of new authority-structures which generate themselves in a productive way. Classical European notions of sovereignty remove act-capacity from their democratic locus and lock it away in a transcendental realm, leading towards a situation in which the locus and the actuality of power no longer coincide.⁵⁰⁹ Hobbes Leviathan or Rousseau's *volonte general* serve as prominent examples in that regard. Immanence remedies

⁵⁰⁷ Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies. Constituent Power and the Modern State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), ch. 2 ff.

⁵⁰⁸ Kalyvas, "Constituent Power", 1.

⁵⁰⁹ Hardt & Negri, *Empire*, 161.

this shortcoming and ensures a “democratic interaction of powers linked together in networks”.⁵¹⁰ Outsourcing act-capacity and hiding it away behind the veil of transcendental legitimacy is no longer applicable, because any separation of the actuality of power from its locus becomes conceptually and politically unfeasible. The political space that emerges at the intersection of constituent power, productive sovereignty, and immanence displaces the conceptual hegemony of Westphalian *inter-state politics* and creates room for *democratic sovereign* action in international affairs.⁵¹¹ Any serious attempt to reclaim the practice of sovereignty from the state must pay attention to this transformative potential of constituent power. Sovereignty can be imagined beyond the dominant Westphalian moment and by means of paying attention to the question of how global political outcomes are produced through processes underlain by constituent forces. Constituent power allows for an articulation of sovereignty alongside productive lines and devoid of coercion, transcendence, inter-state politics, foreign policy, and the logics of command and hierarchy. Paying closer attention to the working of constituent power in world politics, as well as delineating the conditions for transnational democratic action that operates alongside immanent and productive lines, should be the logical consequence for any future study of global democracy and sovereign practices alike.

4.2 The generative momentum of immanence

The literature working at this particular intersection of sovereignty and power in international affairs is still in a developing stage, but the writings of Hardt and Negri - specifically the ones in *Empire* and *Multitude* - serve as well-suited exemplifications for the dynamics unfolded by constituted power, constituent power, coercive sovereignty, and productive sovereignty in world politics. Empire represents first and foremost a technique of post-modern governance.⁵¹² In that regard it appears as a novel political figure, primarily

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., 161.

⁵¹¹ Ibid., 56.

⁵¹² Ibid., 329.

concerned with the immanent and disciplinary aspects of rule. Empire is, at least partly, an innovative political force that disturbs the conceptual and political hegemony of the state. Westphalia has been constructed around binary oppositions, territoriality, and a pluralistic assemblage of formally equal polities.⁵¹³ For the new imperial sovereignty political space has lost this delineating meaning: territory descends into hyperspace; ideological (liberal) and material (money and the division of labor) universalism grinds down binaries; pluralism is replaced by the various hierarchies of imperial command.⁵¹⁴ Yet, despite its ostensibly seminal and original appearance even empire cannot but reproduce the Westphalian logic of control, command, and subordination. Due to its corrosive effect on the practice of statism empire tends to emerge as progressive phenomenon. However, its eventual reliance on control through ‘the bomb’, money, and ether⁵¹⁵ unmask it as an agent of the reaction. Empire as a practice of governance rests primarily on constituted forms of power and inserts itself in the uniform and unbroken tradition of coercive sovereignty.

Multitude, on the contrary, represents the forces that constitute the actuality of productive sovereignty: “The multitude is the real productive force of our social world, whereas empire is a mere apparatus of capture that lives only off the vitality of the multitude”.⁵¹⁶ Its strength lies in its ability to bundle a multiplicity of constituent powers and transform their various diverging momenta into forces that produce ‘the common’.⁵¹⁷ Biopolitical production in the form of immaterial labor, the exchange of information and knowledge, and performative communication shape the common as a socio-political space that opposes the culture of command and control.⁵¹⁸ While the state and empire depend on a certain degree of homogeneity in order to act as sovereign political bodies, multitude presupposes diversity for the biopolitical creation of the common. It

⁵¹³ Ibid., 167.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 345.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 62.

⁵¹⁷ Hardt & Negri, *Multitude*, xv.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., xv-xvi.

remains “composed of innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity or a single identity” and ensures that “social differences remain different”.⁵¹⁹ By that means the multitude manages to square a circle: it acts genuinely politically since it represents the forces of productive and generative sovereignty, yet it bypasses at the very same time the logic of coercion and hierarchy, this intersection of modernity and postmodernity that is shared by the Westphalian and the imperial sovereignties alike. The multitude hence counts as a productive sovereignty and exists by virtue of constituent power.

The transcendence of the Westphalia agent, this mere “assumption about authority”⁵²⁰, is supplemented by the actuality of power and materializes itself in the democratic production of common, shared political spaces. The plane of politics deepens and widens as global affairs turns into a dualistic structure that harbors different types of sovereign processes at the very same time, with transcendence and immanence as dialectical poles. Eventually the changes in ‘propulsions’ - from transcendence to immanence - and ‘planes’ - from inter-state- to biopolitics – transforms ‘procedure’ as well: coercive sovereignty’s logic of *control, command, and hierarchy* gets supplemented by the ethico-political principle of *production*. Meaningful political action in international affairs is no longer reduced to the apparitional repetitiveness of foreign policy, but resonates in the creation of novel political goods: ideas, the exchange of knowledge, communication, etc. mobilize the immanent potential of society and facilitate the emergence of social relationships and collaborative forms of labor beyond the reach of the state and empire.⁵²¹

Yet, despite its evident innovativeness in terms of formulating the conditions for post-structural types of sovereignty one must also acknowledge a series of problems caused by the practice of immaterial labour in particular, and the agentic figures of multitude and empire in general. Empire and multitude mobilize two different forms of immaterial production: the first one, immaterial

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., xiv.

⁵²⁰ Jackson, *Sovereignty in World Politics*, 433.

⁵²¹ Hardt & Negri, *Multitude*, 94 f.

labour, is defined by a narrow economic rationale and highlights the generative potential of knowledge-based activities, and all kinds of affective and analytical work. The second concept, biopolitical activity, alludes to the fabrication of communal life, and situates immaterial endeavors within the wider sphere of social (re-)productiveness.

The *first* problematic issue that arises out of the mobilization of immaterial labour in the context of post-structural sovereignty develops due to the simultaneous broadness and specificity of the concept itself. Immaterial labour, if read through a biopolitical lens, seems to entail all types of social activities without properly distinguishing between mere acts of (often unconscious) social reproduction, and deliberate acts of socio-political production. This sweeping notion of biopolitical labour, which functions as a catch-all-phrase for various, often heterogenous types of operations and exchanges within specific social settings, waters down notions of genuinely political action and strips the process from its directed, deliberate, and constituent elements. Biopolitical sovereignty dissolves into indeterminacy if framed through processes of biopolitical labour due to the assertion that the simple reproduction of the common counts already as a revolutionary act. Yet, while multitude highlights - in a rather egalitarian fashion - the revolutionary potential inherent to mundane and trivial activities, it gives also - in a quite elitist way - rise to a novel class of revolutionary vanguards, which emerges due to the already mentioned narrow definition of immaterial labour. While multitude as the relevant political entity confronts empire and circumnavigates capital through the production of the common, the crucial revolutionary class are those immaterial workers whose products are placed outside capitals reach. The portrayed mode of revolutionary agency is clearly an elitist one and privileges one specific type of economic and productive activity over other types of labor, i.e. industrial or agricultural ones. Hardt and Negri explicitly highlight the inclusive nature of multitude and joyfully proclaim that through biopolitical labour even the unemployed will have a chance to engage in socially and politically productive activities. This promise of inclusive and egalitarian political action is, however, undermined by a parochial and narrow

definition of immaterial labour which focuses solely on one type of productive activity. The unemployed might indeed play an instrumental role in producing the common, but the attack on empire (or rather the process of eluding its grip) is lead by a vanguard class of immaterial laborers.

Secondly, it needs to be remarked that the revolutionary machinery of the multitude, and the attached processes of fabricating the common through the effects of immaterial labour, glosses over class conflicts between biopolitical workers themselves. Hardt and Negri imagine the multitude as a non-homogenizing assemblage, whose fabric is constituted by a set of infinitely fragmented subjectivities. Yet they also assert a necessary degree of homogeneity within multitude, especially in its relation towards empire. In an attempt to assemble a coherent political agent with the capacity to confront and challenge empire's hegemonic position Hardt and Negri lump together teachers, food servers, salespeople, prostitutes, and computer engineers because their 'products' are immaterial in nature. What is casually neglected are the antinomic relationships within multitude itself.⁵²² Overemphasizing the results (the products) of work clouds the relational configurations of the labour process, i.e. the social relations, hierarchies, and class antagonisms which are conditioned by the activity of production itself.⁵²³ A similar problem emerges in the depiction of empire, which is also portrayed as a supposedly homogenous bloc whose internal political struggles are negligible in the wake of its seemingly far more important battles with multitude. Yet, centers of capitalist power do not always act in sync and often expose internal rivalries and antagonisms, which proves to be incompatible with empire's alleged homogeneity.⁵²⁴

Lastly it also proves difficult to sustain assertions about immaterial labor's rapid ascent and its alleged dramatic impact on the reconfiguration of labour activities. Historically there has never really existed a truly hegemonic type of labour, but only a complex interplay between agricultural, industrial, and

⁵²² Camfield, "The Multitude and the Kangaroo", 34.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵²⁴ Thompson, "Foundation and Empire", 79.

immaterial modes of production: “no single socio-technical configuration of wage-labour (...) [has ever been] globally dominant”⁵²⁵ as Camfield notes - an insight positioned in sharp opposition to Hardt and Negri’s assertions about newly emerging, hegemonic types of immaterial production. In addition they also seem to neglect capital’s continuously successful attempts of capturing the activities and the products of immaterial work. Immaterial labour, which serves as the backbone of multitude’s revolutionary endeavors, is subject to commodification in the same way other types of production have been in the past.⁵²⁶ The deterritorialization of production won’t serve as an indisputable prove for the alleged new age of immaterial, network-like labour since “production may be decentralized, while power finance, distribution, and control remain concentrated among big firms”.⁵²⁷ Certain groups of immaterial laborers might be in the privileged position of creating products such as music, computer programs, or literature outside of capital’s reach, but it remains difficult to locate those vast and autonomous spaces of common, post-capitalist production upon which the existence of multitude is supposed to rest.

5. Elements of porous sovereignty

The ensuing situation is far from satisfying, mainly because the agentic figure of the multitude, and the attached forces of immaterial labour, point towards a model of non-Westphalian sovereignty, while leaving too many questions open and unresolved. Multitude mobilizes constituent power in international affairs, it pushes towards a model of agency beyond the state form, and it makes an attempt of delineating the conditions of a global authority-consensus beyond the confinements of territorial politics. What makes the model unconvincing is the vagueness of concepts such as biopolitical labour, a narrow focus on immaterial production, elitist notions of revolutionary action, and, last but not least, an implausible degree of internal harmony upon which a

⁵²⁵ Camfield, “The Multitude and the Kangaroo”, 37.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵²⁷ Thompson, “Foundation and Empire”, 86.

heterogenous revolutionary machinery like the multitude must rest in order to be capable of acting politically in the first place.

In the light of such defects the final part of this chapter will hence investigate further into the required configurations for an immanent, constituent agency in global politics beyond the indeterminacy of biopolitical labour. Such an agency must leave room for potentially antinomic class relationships, while resisting the temptation of lumping together heterogenous sets of actors in indefensibly broad political blocs. Lastly, notions of labour need to broaden their scope of politically constitutive work and refrain from limiting themselves exclusively to immaterial forms of production. Towards that end the section ties together several trains of thought already developed in earlier chapters, and suggests to approach the matter of non-Westphalian sovereignty from an anarchist angle. In more concrete terms it is proposed to position natural groups at the center of non-Westphalian sovereign agency, and to take the requirement for the existence of constituent force at the heart of genuinely sovereign action more seriously. The final section pushes beyond the Westphalian criterion of legal, absolute, and unitary sovereignty, and suggest to conceive of sovereign political dynamics as porous, process-based, and constituent events.

5.1 Constituent power and the centrality of anarchist thought

Section 3.1 has already alluded the transitory relation between diverging notions of power and prevalent framings of sovereign practices in international affairs. It has also been established that a thorough revision of sovereignty needs to pay close attention to, and engage comprehensively with, the effects of constituent practices in global political conduct. If a reformulation of such sovereign practices requires the mobilized of constituent power, it would be prudent to pay the outmost attention to the anarchist tradition of political thought, which has an evident track-record of engaging with questions that concern the institutionalization of constituent agencies in various social contexts. Departing from these observations, and in reaction to the exposed deficits inherent to biopolitical sovereignty, it is now suggested that the Proudhonian take

on constituent power is in a specific and unique position to support the emergence of non-statist and post-Westphalian sovereign agency.

The different appearances of constituent power have been addressed in greater detail in chapter IV, for which reason this subsection will only provide a brief synopsis of a much more complex issue. The broader trajectories upon which the appearance of anarchist constituent power rests can be found - as already suggested - in *Justice in the Revolution and the Church*. *Justice* concerns itself with the ethical question of self-actualization and self-realization, and investigates into the proper political conduct which ought to support this particular end. Against this backdrop two types of political practices are pitted against one another: absolutist/authoritarian forms of social organization on the one side, and revolutionary/anarchist principles on the other. The unequivocal tenor of the developed argument goes as follows: a truly revolutionary moment requires the presence of mutualism and immanence, which can only be achieved by means of arranging the contact-points between the members of a social group through direct encounters, open-ended negotiation, and processes of constant deliberation. The portrayed divide between 'the absolute' and 'the revolution' mirrors the difference between constituted and constituent types of power, and points to the partition's ethical relevancy. In Proudhon's duct revolutionary practices are supposed to be immanent and constituent in nature - ordering societies through the employment of transcendental and constituted means bears an unethical edge to it, and prevents highly important, formative encounters between individual political agents from taking place.

While *Justice* covers questions about the ethicality of mutualist social orders, constituent power's deep-structure is investigated by *Philosophy of Progress (PhP)*, which positions 'revolution' not only as an ethical condition but as an ontological one as well. The non-foundational process ontology developed in *PhP* brushes against the grain of substantialist and monadic political theories, and offers a picture of society as an indeterminate environment, characterized by widespread patterns ontological dynamism. All of social life is inevitably synthetic and grouped, yet it is exactly this ensuing void, the contingency, that creates the

pretext for genuinely constituent socio-political activities. In this light Proudhon's aversion against 'the absolute' (as it is termed in *Justice*), and the preference for 'revolution' becomes clear, mainly because the latter creates the ontological climate in which constituent power is able to flourish.

The mobilization of constituent power is possible in a variety of different fashions, some of them material, other ideational in nature. Concepts such as *collective force* and *collective reason* provide for the practical toolkit required to deploy constituent agency into political practice. *Political Capacity of the Working Class (PCWC)* focuses primarily on matters attached to the mobilization collective reason and the transformation of political communities towards mutualistic network societies via collective and immanent acts of self-alteration. *PCWC* emphasizes the necessity of developing joint patterns of self-awareness in the form of collective reason, for the purpose of initiating public events of self-governance and self-transformation. The presence of collective reason counts as the ideational condition necessary for the realization of emancipatory change, and it explains how groups, and even entire populations, are capable of putting themselves into a constituent positions, which allows for the realization of their immanent, transformative potential. Constituent power appears, in that regard, as a necessarily public and immanent event, and it works through the transformative momentum of collective identities.

Another way of making constituent power count is through the deployment of *collective force* and the performative effects of labour. A connection to the previously discussed writings of Hardt and Negri becomes apparent immediately: both hail, similar to Proudhon in the 19th century, the generative and transformative potential of work. Yet, Proudhon refrained, unlike his 21st century successors, from distinguishing between different qualitative types of labour. For him all forms of productive activity - i.e. industrial, agricultural, or skilled labour - exalt collective force, as long as production takes place in common and in concert with others. Collective force does not need to be summoned, but is, unlike its counterpart collective reason, always already and latently present through multiple acts of joint labour. Against this backdrop *What*

is Property? (WiP) raises the question how a demos' constituent capacity resonates in collective acts of labor, and how certain social institution, in particular property, lead to an appropriation of collective and constituent force through a class of proprietors. Notions of capitalist property represent a type of constituted power, as well as a form of royal or sovereign principles similar to absolutist forms of government. Contra to such static and 'unproductive' notions of ownership *WiP* develops a dynamic (and democratic) concept of possession which combines the economic right of resources usage with the political ability to control these resources in the first place. The central issue raised is concerned with the question how the products of collective force and constituent power can be re-appropriated by their locus of initial production.

5.2 Porous sovereignty: empirical, partial, synthetic

While previous sections referred repeatedly to the mechanisms and practices which support the resonance of constituent power in various political and social fields, it has still not been made explicit how a non-Westphalian sovereign agency in global politics might look like in terms of its institutional qualities. To reiterate: it was proposed to evaluate the content and the quality of sovereignty by means of reframing the practice through the lens of constituent power. Ethical, ontological, and practical elements of constituent power were then traced through the anarchist tradition of political thought. For the purpose of initiating a displacement of the dominant Westphalian narrative it is now suggested to position the agentic figure of the natural group as an appropriate vessel for constituent sovereign agency in global politics.

The observations made in chapter VI are crucial in that regard, due to the development of an anarchist take on IR-ontology via the deployment of said natural-groups-perspective. Departing from a non-foundational perspective chapter VI proposes a model of ontological anarchy, characterized by processes of becoming, antinomy, and relationality. The portrayal of a deep, foundationless anarchic ontology has not only led to an image of grouped and synthetic social life, but highlights in addition the centrality of such a void in creating the required

conditions for the flourishing of constituent power. Two of the central concepts introduced in this particular chapter were *compositions* and *conceptions*. Compositions stand for the productive yet indeterminate ontological fabric of commonly produced political spaces. Conceptions serve as analytical representations of movement which help making interwoven and overlain acts of political labour cognitively graspable. Especially the latter term was deemed to be of importance in the context of natural group formation. The chapter establishes a firm connection between natural groups in the area of politics, and conceptions in the field of ontology, and argues that in the same way conceptions give meaning to composition on an ontological level, 'social' or 'natural groups' give meaning to an otherwise indeterminate relationality in the political realm. Furthermore it was suggested to trace back political events to the interplay between natural groups of varying sizes and qualities: compositions and conceptions emerging from the productive void of deep anarchy are similar to those social or natural groups that harvest the generative potential of immanent social labor. All politics is, in consequence, politics among natural groups - groups that need to be understood as proto-polities and social embryos of varying kinds and sizes.

However, natural groups are not only involved in the cognitive ordering of the political landscape, but serve in addition as evidence for society's immanent productiveness: any human collective - a family, a workshop, a battalion, or a state - qualifies as a group as long as it is involved in generative or reproductive acts of social labor. Some, if not most, natural groups do certainly limit themselves to the exercise of mundane and unspectacular acts of simple social reproduction. Yet, a minority utilizes their immanent capacity for genuinely productive purposes and turns into a locus for constituent power. When these grouped and synthetic (hence porous) agencies perform political founding acts through their collective labour, and by means of exploiting the liberties offered to them by a foundationless anarchic ontology, they generate themselves as relevant sovereign agencies, and turn into *porous sovereigns*, due to their ability of mobilizing a *begründende Gewalt* - a founding power. A natural group then exercises porous

sovereignty if it finds itself in a position which allows for the mobilization of constituent power: the sovereign is who successfully marshals constituent force.

Natural groups must hence be viewed as the proper vessel for non-Westphalian sovereign agency, mainly because constituent power resonates in and works through them. This sovereign agency differs fundamentally from the standard-type of the Westphalian agent, whose defining attributes are routinely characterized by the substantialist markers of *legality*, *absoluteness*, and *unitarity*.

Constituent natural groups defy the logic of fixed and relatively inflexible authority-structures in world politics, and present instead an image of sovereignty as a process: legality is not of primary concern for a porous sovereign. What matters instead is the *empirical* presence of constituent force - *auctoritas*, the actuality of power matters, not *potestas*, its potentiality.⁵²⁸ Absoluteness, the second staple of Westphalia, and the requirement for a sovereign to act as the supreme source of authority within a given territory, is also put into question and undermined by a natural-groups-perspective. What matters instead is the *partial* exercise of constituent force within certain, often limited sectors of society. The requirement of absoluteness is an illusion to begin with, which is exemplified by the fact that even extremely powerful states must tolerate pockets of lawlessness and competing sources of authority within their own territory. Comprehending sovereignty as the partial and sectoral mobilization of constituent power delivers an empirically much more warranted picture in that regard. Unitarity, the last Westphalian core-principle, gets replaced by accounts of syntheticism and antinomy. The unitarity of the sovereign, territorial agent presupposed the existence of a coherent political space, characterized by a clearly identifiable inside-outside distinction, and patterns of control and command responsive to a centralized source of authority. Such discreteness proves indefensible if approached from a porous-sovereignty-angle, since the exercise of constituent agency depends strongly on a political space's *antinomic* and *synthetic* makeup. Antinomy prevents social arrangements from solidifying and forces their constant

⁵²⁸ Agamben, *State of Exception*, 86.

adaption to a permanently changing political landscape. Syntheticism alludes to the grouped nature of social arrangement and the dubiousity of essentialist claims. While the Westphalian agent is then characterized as a legal, absolute, and unitary political player, the porous sovereign exalts *empirical*, *partial*, and *synthetic* properties.

6. Conclusion: porous sovereignty in global politics

6.1 Porous sovereignty in relation to Westphalia

Inter-state relations are characterized by, and also suffer from, the vast absence of constituent momenta (c.f. chapter II). Global politics of the Westphalian type is instead defined by the omnipresence of constituted power and the deriving attributes of legalism, absoluteness, and unitarity. This triad forces international political conduct into the stale repetitiveness of foreign policy operations, which are located on a spectrum with ‘force’ and ‘legalism’ at its respective ends. The Westphalian political cosmology is certainly not negligent of constituent forces in politics *per se*, yet it confines them towards the inside of territorially defined political communities.

Natural groups on the contrary, especially in their function as porous sovereignties, are not bound to such inherently statist operations and certainly do not rely on territorially defined political spaces for the projection of constituent power. They are also not chiefly concerned with legislation or legal recognition, and instead satisfied with the partial exercise of constituent force. Furthermore they are capable to accommodate dissent due to their necessarily synthetic and inherently non-homogenous internal makeup. Natural groups in general, and porous sovereignties in particular, practice a different kind of power politics (ch. VI) and enrich international politics’ spatial imaginability by means of presenting an image of non-discrete and non-territorial, yet still sovereign, political zones. In this framing the projection and the exercise of sovereignty hinges chiefly on patterns of constituent relationality, i.e. collective force, collective reason, socio-political labour, commutation and agglomeration, and mutualistic principles.

A narrow reading of sovereignty as a purely Westphalian attribute leads quickly and directly into an unjustified conflation of the inter-state system and the international (or rather the global). Natural groups and porous sovereignties break with the prevalent narrative of a political plane whose most important operatives are supposedly states. Demonstrating an enhanced susceptibility towards sovereignty's varieties and guises helps to conceptualize the inter-state system as a distinct assemblage of a highly specialized set of natural groups whose mutual and exclusive intercourse is regulated by various negotiated, historically grown institutions. State-groups themselves are, however, only part and parcel of a much more complex and comprehensive global political realm in which heterogenous sets of actors engage in the mobilization of constituted and constituent political force.

6.2 Porous sovereignty and the multitude

Porous sovereignties deliver a broader notion of agency, not only in relation to Westphalian inter-state politics, but also in regards to revolutionary approaches, such as the previously scrutinized multitude-concept by Hardt and Negri. The earlier discussion on this particular agentic figure criticized biopolitical labour's tendency of giving rise to a vanguard definition of revolutionism. Hardt and Negri consciously employ immaterial labour as a transformative mechanism, due to its ability of escaping capital's grip through the construction of *the common in common*, outside of empire's reach. Yet, this revolution which employs biopolitical labour, is also heavily reliant on, and centered around, the actions of a vanguard-group of immaterial laborers. The existence of multitude then comes at a heavy price, since it must privilege specific types of labour and laborers in order to retain its ability to marshal political power.

From the perspective of porous sovereignty the idea of a vanguard-revolution appears as nonsensical and has little buy. There are certainly overlaps between porous sovereignties and the multitude, i.e. a framing of revolutionary events as prolonged and constitutive processes. Yet, from a porous sovereignty perspective these events are initiated by collective forces and collective reasons.

What matters in that regard is not the deployment of one particular type of revolutionary activity (i.e. the mobilization of immaterial labour), but the mobilization of collective forces/reasons and the existence of an immanent and productive process in the first place. Not the product of political labour matters, but the relations which made production possible. Any labour-operation can attain the status of a proto-revolutionary act, as long as it manages to project constituent force. The existence of revolutionary vanguards is not central in that regard.

Porous sovereignty offers a broader conception of political/revolutionary agency and remedies another shortcoming of multitude, namely its vagueness in regards to the transformative potential of biopolitical labour. Not every act of labour is also revolutionary in nature. Labour can be dull and entirely unproductive (in a transformative sense) if it only engages in the mere reproduction of shared political spaces. And this also applies to immaterial and biopolitical work: affective laborers such as waiters, call center agents, or teachers repeating the same syllabus over years/decades fall into the category of immaterial workers, yet their activities are reproductive at best and can hardly count as revolutionary or constitutive. The natural-groups-perspective recognizes the existence of simple, dull, and reproductive acts of labour, but refrains from forcefully and artificially elevating them to supposedly revolutionary actions. Yet it still creates the room for potentially productive activities: natural groups (and waiters, call center agents, and teachers certainly belong into this category as well) can act in a genuinely sovereign way, but only if they project constituent power. Revolution is not forced that way, but the required outlets for the deployment of transformative powers are still created.

Lastly it is of importance to highlight porous sovereignty's non-reliance on alleged harmony. Multitude and empire must appear as relatively homogenous and harmonious groups *vis a vis* one another, and despite prevalent intra-class conflicts or clashes between capitalist groups and core-states. Such a lump-approach to agency fuses potentially antagonistic agencies together, and groups them in the crude and undifferentiated realms of multitude and empire. Porous

sovereignty on the contrary receives its momentum from antinomic relations, and can function properly without markers of fictitious harmony. Natural groups in general, and porous sovereigns in particular are, due to their synthetic makeup, perfectly capable of accommodating latent tension, contestation, and even dissent. Consequently it is possible to adequately grasp the struggles between competing groups without forcing them into pre-defined political categories.

6.3 Porous sovereignty and the exercise of structural control

While porous sovereignty as an analytical category explains the interplay between sovereign agents of various guises, it also serves as a normative and emancipatory principle. Westphalian sovereignty had (and has) the purpose to manage the *circulation of violence* within domestic realms and across international political spaces - a reactive principle. Porous sovereignty is, on the contrary, concerned with processes involving the exercise of *structural control* - an active principle. Towards that end porous sovereignty bears certain republican elements and institutionalizes republican politics on a global scale. Most notable in that regard is the notion of freedom as non-domination - a hallmark of anarchist political theory. And, more concretely, a constant strive towards structural control, via the exercise of political agency, through collaborative acts of socio-political labour, within the context of a natural-groups-setting.

Emerging notions of freedom as acts of structural control point towards the construction of political liberty in the form of non-domination and independence from *arbitrary power*.⁵²⁹ Pettit notes in relation to republicanism that - unlike in the liberal tradition - domination is not just defined by actual interference, but rather by the mere *potential* of being subjugated. The sheer possibility of illegitimate control, not its actual exercise, is already enough to infringe upon a person's or a group's liberty. Questions of 'who is *ultimately* in control' and 'who is the agent *in charge*' advance to yardsticks for measuring

⁵²⁹ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, *Republicanism*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/republicanism/#LibNonDom>, 1 (accessed 07.09.2014).

political freedom.⁵³⁰ Operating outside of someone's command "consists in not being subject to anyone else's will in the exercise of deliberation and choice".⁵³¹ In the republican narrative an agent is then free as long as no-one has the *structural* and *institutional disposition* (the capacity) to make him or her decide otherwise.⁵³² Anarchism picks up on this positive and republican account of liberty as a practice in which potential sources of interference are properly kept at bay, and offers a set of *three* distinct mechanisms allowing for the deliberate, democratic control of political spaces:

(I) A *first* pillar of said strategy entails the mobilization of constituent power in the form of collective force and reason. Members of a natural group make an explicitly directed attempt to control and actively shape the political environment they are embedded in through acts of socio-political labour. In regards to matters of structural control over potential sources of interference this first principle is in fact paramount, since it highlights the importance of joint socio-political labour as an emancipatory tool. Labour counts not only as a mere economic activity for the production of commodities to be traded on the marketplace. Political activity in general, and sovereign action in particular, necessitates the forging of such constituent relationships and joint patterns of industriousness, since "no human life, not even the life of the hermit in nature's wilderness, is possible without a world which directly or indirectly testifies to the presence of other human beings".⁵³³ Political life, sovereign life, is then preconditioned by the existence of living labour, *potentia*⁵³⁴, and a *vita activa*.⁵³⁵ Work and action ascend to tools of an activist citizenship, centered around the performance of structural control.

⁵³⁰ Philip Pettit, "Freedom: psychological, ethical, and political", *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 18, no. 4 (2015): 383 ff.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, 382.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 384; and Andreas Busen, "Non-domination, non-normativity and neo-republican politics", *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 18, no. 4 (2015): 408.

⁵³³ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 22.

⁵³⁴ Jason Read, "The Antagonistic Ground of Constitutive Power: An Essay on the Thought of Antonio Negri", *Rethinking MARXISM* 11, no. 2 (1999): 10.

⁵³⁵ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 73.

The danger looming behind the latter notion of freedom as structural control can be found in the necessary presence of a collectivist element, which breeds the possibility of undifferentiated groupism and potentially totalizing strives for perfectionism. Crushing collectivism is imminent in cases where the self's substance gets projected onto a collective body, and if this agent is then charged with the promise to lift the demos as a whole to higher levels of freedom - i.e. a tribe, a cult, a church, the state, and basically any form of social organization that manages to transcend its constituent individual parts. Berlin describes negative liberty as the right to be left alone, to realize ones preferences, and the process of being "principally concerned with the area of control, not with its source".⁵³⁶ It separates the question of "Who governs me" from "How far does government interfere with me".⁵³⁷ Positive freedom on the contrary defines liberty as a function of self-mastery: "I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other men's acts of will", and further "I wish to be somebody, not nobody; a doer - (...) self-directed and not acted upon".⁵³⁸ Berlin rejects and abandons the ideal of positive freedom and retreats into an account of negative liberty, since freedom in the 'positive' sense can easily destroy 'negative' liberties when the sovereignty of the people encroaches on the individual's one, with the tyranny of the majority as its eventual result.⁵³⁹

(II) & (III) While natural groups and porous sovereignties provide for outlets of positive liberty towards other collective agencies, the anarchist conception of freedom rests on two additional pillars and allows for the synchronous realization of negative liberties as well. The *second* cornerstone of the anarchist agenda (the relation between the collective agent and its constituent parts) is represented by the antinomic makeup of natural groups and their permissiveness towards dissent. Antinomy as a pluralistic political principle

⁵³⁶ Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty", in *Four Essays on Liberty*, ed. Isaiah Berlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 129.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 163.

prevents such settings from solidification and homogenization, and provides protection for voices of dissent and difference. The principle of mutualism builds the foundation for the *third* and last pillar of the anarchist agenda, and reinforces the commitment towards non-domination in the ‘private’ realm (between the members of a natural group). Mutualism is geared towards safeguarding the integrity of individual freedoms through its representation of reciprocity as a form of political justice.

Combining the organizational and normative principles of collective force/reason, antinomy, and mutualism addresses Berlin’s fear of a crushing collectivism, and it diffuses concerns about the resulting diminishment of personal freedom. A firm commitment towards ‘groupness’ (as opposed to ‘grouism’ - c.f. chapter VI), the acceptance of porous sovereignties as functional arrangements (as means to an emancipatory end, never as ends in themselves), and the universal affirmation of non-domination as a central political principle, enables the co-exercise of positive and negative accounts of liberty. Providing for such seemingly heterogenous, and at first glance even contradictory political goods, does not put anarchism outside of the republican canon though. Instead it goes along with the instigations of one of the republican tradition’s chief visionaries: Machiavelli, and his theory of the *humours*.

The humours anticipate modern pluralism by refraining from a vilification of dissent and internal discord. Machiavelli’s *humours* portray, similar to Proudhon’s *antinomy*, tension and struggle as the lifeblood of the demos and as a guarantee for its continued vitality. Political communities comprise by default of multiple social groups, each of which equipped with mutually conflicting aspirations.⁵⁴⁰ The homogenous political body is a fiction - the strive for an allegedly harmonizing synthesis a danger. A well ordered political body - the perfect commonwealth in Machiavelli’s duct - manages instead to balance among

⁵⁴⁰ Dragica Vujadinovic, “Machiavelli’s republican political theory”, *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 40, no. 1 (2014): 55 f.

prevalent humours and embraces the momentum provided by frictional, antinomic relations.⁵⁴¹

Machiavelli's republicanism and Proudhon's anarchism alike seek to remedy the dangers of transcendentalism, and propagate instead a presentist politics of the here-and-now, incredulous of all utopian promises, and petrified by the terrors of perfectibility.⁵⁴² The ensuing built-in pluralism is emancipatory to the extent that it allows for the exercise of structural control. Its focus on processes and means (hardly ever ends) creates a platform for immanent, non-normative, and non-substantialist political action.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 56 f.

⁵⁴² David Owen, "Machiavelli's *il Principe* and the Politics of Glory", *European Journal of Political Theory*, first published online January 18, 2015: 3 f.

⁵⁴³ Isaiah Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli", in *Against the Current - Essays in the History of Ideas*, ed. Isaiah Berlin (New York: The Viking Press, 1980), 69 ff.

CHAPTER EIGHT

VIII | ANARCHIST ETHICS: SCRUTINIZING AGONISTIC SPATIALITY

1. Introduction: agonistic spatiality

At this point the study has already worked through a number of IR's *grand themes* and built alternative narratives alongside anarchist lines. In regards to power in international affairs the importance of paying a heightened attention to constituent power was stressed, mainly in order to gain a more sophisticated understanding about the production of global political outcomes. Furthermore it was proposed to conceive of the global's ontology as a foundationless, contingent, and process-driven political space, and to initiated a shift away from state-centric framings of 'the international'. Sovereignty was re-formulated as a partial, empirical, and synthetic phenomenon, one that stands in stark contrast to the absolute, juridical, and unitary Westphalian type. Lastly it was proposed to re-think constituent agency in international affairs and to recognize the political productiveness of porous sovereignties and natural groups of varying sizes and qualities.

The final chapter will link these findings to questions of ethics in global affairs, and, more concretely, to accounts of political responsibility in world

politics. One of the chapter's main objectives is to intervene into Chantal Mouffe's agonistic international political project by means of deconstructing the normative vision of the *pluriverse* and the ethics of distance it conveys. Such an in-depth engagement with agonistic political theory is highly applicable due to vast overlaps between agonism and anarchism. The agonistic pluriverse comes in fact closest to what is currently available in terms of a quasi-anarchist global regime structure.

Yet, Mouffe's pluriverse also exposes some problematic traits which need to be addressed and remedied. Agonism, it is argued, lacks the ability of formulating conditions for political responsibility that would reach beyond the hermetic constraints of the pluriverse. Responsibility towards 'the other' exists in the form of a commitment towards a conflictual consensus. However, due to the division of the political plane into large, culturally distinct hegemonic blocs, accounts of responsibility can only develop within the confinements of these polities, not across them. The chapter scrutinizes this very notion of agonistic hegemony from an anarchist angle and suggests to envisage a radically democratic perspective of order, ethics, and responsibility beyond the spatial constraints of the pluriverse.

The supposed necessity of organizing international affairs around large regional centers of cultural and political hegemony derives from the Schmittian view on 'the political', which is trapped in a coercive vision of sovereignty (this matter was already problematize in chapter VII). Schmitt is reluctant, yet far from incapable, of acknowledging the existence of constituent power *prior* and *past* to the moment of the decision. Through a mobilization of *porous sovereignty* the chapter takes up on the suggestion that sovereignty and power overlap fundamentally, and that diverging notions of sovereignty must be conceived of as functions of power. Analogous to the preceding chapters it is argued that sovereignty's essence is dualistic and either characterized by porosity or coerciveness, depending on the context of power (constituent or constituted) into which it is inserted. Hence, hegemony must not exclusively be conceived of as the product of a sovereign decision (coercive sovereignty, constituted power), but

can also be the result of intertwining collective forces and reasons (porous sovereignty, constituent power).

The chapter contributes to the formulation of anarchist-informed international ethics and moves beyond agonism's account of political responsibility as a conflictual consensus in a static pluriverse. This framing fails to grasp the omnipresent ontology of anarchy within global politics. Anarchism and agonism are, as already suggested, by no means incompatible, and there exist vast overlaps between the two projects. While the *second* section discusses the ethics of space as an institution, the *third* section of the chapter will thus pay closer attention to the similarities of, and the potential cross-pollination between, anarchist and agonist political thought. The argument subsequently problematizes agonism's spatial project and the attached ethical implications (section *four*). The final section (*five*) introduces an anarchist account of global ethics in which political responsibility resonates within and across *porous sovereignties* in a spatial setting termed '*omniverse*'.

2. Locating responsibility: institutional architecture and the ethics of space

The opening section of the chapter investigates the impact of structural arrangements, institutional design, and spatial architecture on notions of ethical conduct in global affairs. As an underlying question it is asked how institutional modes of arranging the contact points between collective agents facilitates the emergence of specific notions of responsibility, while impacting at the very same time on the ability of an agent to discharge an assigned set of duties. The review opens with an assessment of *responsibility as structural transformation* and pays particular attention to Thomas Pogge's moral cosmopolitanism. The second section touches upon *institutional moral agency* and lines out Chris Brown's and Toni Erskine's respective takes on international society and international organizations. The third and final part explores issues of *spatial arrangements as 'ethos'* through the work of Louiza Odysseos and R.B.J. Walker - this sub-section will also develop the analytical framework for the ensuing analysis of agonistic spatiality and the anarchist ethics of space.

Responsibility as structural transformation: Pogge's account of moral cosmopolitanism is particularly concerned with the performance of an institutional moral analysis and institutional re-design as a means of addressing injustice.⁵⁴⁴ When determining the conditions for ethical conduct in global affairs the assessment of duties, obligations, and responsibilities needs to be susceptible to the causal effects exerted by structural and institutional arrangements. Whereas interactional approaches focus narrowly on the actions of individuals and collective agents, institutional approaches broaden the scope of moral enquiry by means of assessing the equally enabling and constraining effects of conventions and practices on ethical conduct⁵⁴⁵: "The emergence of global justice talk is closely related to the increasing explanatory importance of social institutions".⁵⁴⁶ Structural arrangements are of ethical relevancy to the extent that they impact potentially on an agent's ability to claim and access human rights - conversely, if human rights can't be claimed their underfulfillment can often be traced back to certain features entrenched in the global institutional order.⁵⁴⁷

The effect of institutions on an agent's ability to claim specific rights is certainly a mediated one, which implies that structures do not cause harm actively, i.e. they do not displace, torture, or suppress people. Yet, institutional arrangements can have an enabling effect on the commitment, or at least the possible occurrence, of human rights violations. Certain institutionally entrenched privileges and modalities, created and maintained through practices such as sovereignty or global capitalism, have the potential to impoverish people inadvertently or deprive them, by proxy, of their ability to realize human rights.⁵⁴⁸ In that regard Pogge refers specifically to resource and borrowing privileges that are regularly misused by corrupt and/or incompetent elites for the purpose of furthering personal gains, while simultaneously inflicting harm on entire national

⁵⁴⁴ Thomas Pogge, *Politics as usual: what lies behind pro-poor rhetoric* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 16.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁴⁷ Thomas Pogge, "Real World Justice", *The Journal of Ethics* 9, no. 1/2 (2005): 43; and Thomas Pogge, "Recognized and Violated by International Law: The Human Rights of the Global Poor", *Leiden Journal of International Law* 18 (2005): 721.

⁵⁴⁸ Pogge, *Politics as usual*, 18.

economies, which need to absorb the fallout of excessive borrowing and spending.⁵⁴⁹ These privileges - created and positively sanctioned by international law and bodies such as the IMF or the World Bank⁵⁵⁰ - cause preventable harm to otherwise vulnerable populations, and need to move into the center of ethical assessment.

Pogge's institutional moral approach establishes a firm connection between institutional architecture and patterns of moral responsibility: "An institutional order is human-rights violating when it foreseeably gives rise to greater insecurity in access to the objects of human rights [...] than would be *reasonably avoidable* through an *alternative feasible institutional design*".⁵⁵¹ Those in the capacity to avoid human rights violations by means of amending the institutional order upon which international affairs rests are reminded of their duty (or rather responsibility) to react upon institutionally induced underfulfillments of human rights. The particular addressees of this call for action are the "reasonably privileged citizens of the rich democracies"⁵⁵² who are morally obliged to do no harm⁵⁵³ and responsible for holding their governments accountable for the avoidable human rights violations that could be prevented by means of inducing reasonable institutional reforms.

Institutional moral agency: Pogge's approach rests on the assumption that institutions can only be held causally, yet not morally, responsible for human rights violations. Institutions play an instrumental role in the systematic underfulfillment of human rights, but they are none the less passive in nature, and bare of any immediate act-capacity. Hence it would be implausible to assign duties to them in the first place. Institutions enable, but they do not act, and they

⁵⁴⁹ Pogge, "Recognized and Violated by International Law", 737-739. Pogge remarks that international institutions also impact on how societies "govern and tax themselves, how they organize education, health care, agriculture, and defense, and how they regulate foreign investment, intellectual property, and foreign trade", Pogge, *Politics as usual*, 17.

⁵⁵⁰ Pogge, "Real World Justice", 48 ff.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 43 - emphasis added.

⁵⁵² Ibid., 45.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 34; and Pogge, "Recognized and Violated by International Law", 721.

certainly are not in the position to assume the role of a 'responsible' international actor.

This reading of the role of institutions is, however, not shared unequivocally. Brown argues that international society does indeed possess agency which enables it to act morally. As an agent constituted by institutions, i.e. sovereignty, international law, and diplomacy, the society of states needs to be understood as a type of association or club. As such it is capable of developing centralized decision-making capacities that allow for deliberate actions and the conscious reflection upon the im-/morality of its activities.⁵⁵⁴ Similar to legal persons international society cannot perform actions literally but must work through a body of representatives that act on its behalf.⁵⁵⁵ As historical case for the act- and the moral capacity of international society serves - among other examples⁵⁵⁶ - the 19th century Congress system. In regard to the Congress system and the adjacent Concert of Europe it is striking that the great continental powers felt a sense of collective responsibility towards the maintenance of a conservative cosmopolitan governance across the European continent. Out of this self-assigned and power-backed mandate arose the identity of the European Congress, with its independent institutional identity, that existed separately from the individual interests of its constituent parts. The Congress system thus counts as an early example for the mobilization of a collective moral agent in the context of a Westphalian setting.⁵⁵⁷

Erskine pushes this logic of institutional moral agency even further and suggests that collective bodies can have absolute ontological independence, which qualifies them as moral agents of the first order. Prevalent discussions revolving

⁵⁵⁴ Chris Brown, "Moral agency and international society", *Ethics & International Affairs* 15, no. 2 (2001): 89 f.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁵⁵⁶ other cases include NATO's intervention in Kosovo in the 1990s and the role of the US as the only remaining hegemon in a unipolar world - c.f. Brown, "Moral agency and international society", 96 and Chris Brown, "Do Great Powers Have Great Responsibilities? Great Powers and Moral Agency", *Global Society* 18, no. 1 (2004): 12 ff.

⁵⁵⁷ Brown, "Moral agency and international society", 94; and Brown, "Do Great Powers Have Great Responsibilities?", 7.

around questions of responsibility suffer from an anthropomorphic bias⁵⁵⁸ which gears the debate towards the assumption that only individual actors - i.e. humans or states - can possess (moral) agency, while institutional arrangements are reduced to ontologically dependent structures, mobilized by states as vehicles for simple goal attainment.⁵⁵⁹ Institutional moral agents abilities to understand and respond to moral requirements is routinely underestimated⁵⁶⁰, and the ethical relevancy of collective agency is rarely recognized.⁵⁶¹ It is certainly not the case that all types of collectivities qualify equally for the label 'collective moral agent': crowds, mobs, checkout-lines and other aggregated collectivities would not pass the test of agency due to their randomness and erratic behavior.⁵⁶² Yet, in building on the work of Peter French, Erskine argues that corporations and conglomerate collectivities can indeed qualify as moral agents if the conglomerate possesses an independent identity; if it can resort to a set of internal decision making procedures; if it is able to maintain an identity over time; and if it possesses a concept of itself as a unit. In cases where these criteria are fulfilled a conglomerate passes as a purposive actor capable of claiming sets of rights, duties, and responsibilities.⁵⁶³

Spatial arrangements as 'ethos': For the remainder of the chapter the study entertains two separate yet somewhat intertwined ideas: the *first* claim suggests to perceive of spatial arrangements as a specific type of institution that needs to be subject to in-depth moral scrutiny. The spatial ordering of the political landscape must be perceived of as a practice or an institution, irregardless of the type of space it creates, be it territorial (i.e. statist) or structural (i.e. economic) in nature. It needs to be acknowledged that spatializing practices and the emerging spatio-

⁵⁵⁸ Toni Erskine, "Blood on the UN's hands? Assigning Duties and Apportioning Blame to an Intergovernmental Organisation", *Global Society* 18, no. 1 (2004): 23.

⁵⁵⁹ Toni Erskine, "Locating Responsibility: The Problem of Moral Agency in International Relations", in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Christian Reus-Smit & Duncan Snidal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 703 f.

⁵⁶⁰ Toni Erskine, "Assigning responsibilities to institutional moral agents: The case of states and quasi states", *Ethics & International Affairs* 15, no. 2 (2001): 68.

⁵⁶¹ Erskine, "Locating responsibility", 705.

⁵⁶² Erskine, "Assigning responsibilities to institutional moral agents", 70.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 71 f.; and Erskine, "Blood on the UN's hands?", 25 f.

temporal patterns of order are of ethical relevancy due to their impact on the contextual narratives that frame the conditions for responsible action towards the 'other'. Political communities are routinely characterized by their (alleged) spatially consolidated appearance. Most notable in that regard is certainly the state, which is, by definition, a territorial polity. Yet even more ambiguous terms such as 'the West', 'the Global South', or 'the Middle East' are discursively underpinned by a certain degree of spatial or territorial coherence. The spatializing narrative resonates often implicitly in a number of prevalent debates that touch upon questions of responsibility in global affairs, i.e. climate change, the practice of aid giving, migration, and so forth. Here 'perpetrators' and 'victims' often assume a form of coherent, spatially defined political communities. The West as a space does not act, yet, treating a heterogenous assemblage of sovereign state *as if* it possesses some sort of spatial unity helps assigning duties and responsibilities to an otherwise amorphous set of individual actors.

This is not to suggest though that spatial arrangements qualify *per se* as institutional moral agents, like Brown and Erskine have argued in their respective discussions of international society and conglomerate collectivities. When it is suggested to perceive of spatio-temporal pattern of order as institutions the argument leans more towards Pogge's take on causal responsibility which assumes that structural arrangements are mediately responsible for the facilitation of political outcomes, despite their apparent lack of agency. Congruously one can not assign duties or responsibilities towards them, which is a privilege reserved only for actors with a decisive impact on the institutional architecture of the structure itself. Yet, spaces - if interpreted as the outcome of political practices - can still be subject to an ethical assessment, mainly due to their enabling and facilitating effect on an agent's ability to discharge an assigned set of duties or responsibilities. Reverting to Pogge's line of reasoning allows us to put spatializing practices and spatio-temporal institutions in the focus of a moral assessment, while synchronously deferring the question of institutional agency for the meantime.

A *second* claim that underpins the subsequent analysis assumes that an intimate connection between spatiality and *ethos* exist. It is argued that normative claims about the spatial architecture of the international are not of a purely technical nature, but contribute in addition to the development of epistemic schemes whose referent points define the way in which individual agents relate to one another. It can hence be said that spatio-temporal narratives - i.e. in the form of an agonistic pluriverse - define the conditions of a global ethos. In her work on *dangerous ontologies* Odysseos interprets ethos as a form of ethics that describes “an attitude and mode of relating to others”.⁵⁶⁴ Odysseos derives this understanding from Heidegger for whom ethos amounts to “the open region in which the human being dwells”.⁵⁶⁵ For both, Heidegger and Odysseos, *ethos* are then expressions of the attitudinal aspects of communal life - they are “a manner of being”⁵⁶⁶ as Foucault has put it.

The ethics that underpin IR’s contemporary vision of Westphalian spatiality are built around an *ethos of survival* and reinforced by a narrative of uncertainty, anarchy, and self-help, structurally designed to revolve around binaries of self/enemy, inside/outside, and order/anarchy.⁵⁶⁷ Odysseos traces the prevalent ethos back to the Hobbesian state of nature, which resonates strongly in IR’s takes on international anarchy: here the ‘other’ is a source of incalculable risk and permanent competition - not out of malice, but due to human beings inherent similarity in regards to their faculties and powers.⁵⁶⁸ Individuals might have overlapping and competing interests, but the absence of a natural hierarchy prohibits the *a priori* settlement of emerging conflicts. Consequently, humans find themselves in a hypothetical war of all against all, in which unmediated conflict is an ever present possibility. Only the transference of some of man’s natural rights onto the Leviathan will allow for the transcendence of the state of nature. The

⁵⁶⁴ Odysseos, “Dangerous ontologies”, 404.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 414.

⁵⁶⁶ Michel Foucault, “Politics and Ethics: An Interview”, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 377.

⁵⁶⁷ Odysseos, “Dangerous ontologies”, 404 f.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 406 ff.

ethos of survival conveyed by this narrative hinges strongly at a perception of enmity: the ‘other’ is reduced to a threat which does not count as a subject of ethical concerns, let alone as an agent with legitimate claims and demands. This is accompanied by a notion of responsibility as a purely self-referential impulse, limited to the self’s survival.⁵⁶⁹ The dilemma that surrounds the state of nature is only partly resolved by the emergence of the Leviathan: within its realm survivalist connotations are indeed tamed, and order in the form of legitimate authority and hierarchy permeates, what puts an end to the ever present possibility of conflict. Outside of the Leviathan’s spatial confinement uncertainty prevails and the war of all against all continues indefinitely. The ‘other’ as an enemy does not vanish but is simply relegated to the outside. An outside which is, in contemporary IR’s ductus, the realm of anarchy.⁵⁷⁰ In the Hobbesian narrative the construction of differential spaces is thus a clear response to an ontology of danger. Specific spatial arrangements and sovereign practices are ways of coping with this threat. Space in that regard is then not simply a realm of control, but represents, in addition, a clearly defined layer of predictability and security whose integrity is guaranteed by the Leviathan.

Whereas Odysseos traces the emergence of exclusionary spatializing practices back to an ethos of survival, Walker puts the phenomenon in an even wider context and argues that ensuing patterns of inside/outside and order/anarchy are peculiar ways of addressing the dilemma of modernity: the combination of “enlightenment and despair” that oscillates permanently “between a universalising progress and a relativistic nihilism”.⁵⁷¹ Walker contends that “modernity framed as a universalising history of (instrumental) rationalisation is simultaneously an account of modernity as a realm of non-rational or criterionless choices about ultimate values”.⁵⁷² Sovereignty and Westphalian spatiality respond not only to danger, but also to an uniquely modern

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., 414.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., 410 ff.

⁵⁷¹ R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 74.

⁵⁷² Ibid., 56.

dialectic. The prevalent spatio-temporal order of the political plane, which is dominated by discrete polities, is heavily underpinned by a vision of the modern subject that attempts to re-negotiate the terms of relationally in a world that is based on the mutually contradictory terms of nihilism and disenchantment, universality and rationality. While the modern subject attempts to cope with the prospects of nihilism and disenchantment that gave rise to the endlessly empowering accounts of constituent power and productive sovereignty, its search for universal markers of rationality and ethicality endures. The binary ontology of the international provides a temporary relief for this enlightenment-despair, and resolves the clash between universality and particularity in a spatial way⁵⁷³: the inside/domestic realm does justice to the universalizing claims of modernity, the outside/the international caters towards radical skepticism under the auspices of power politics.⁵⁷⁴

3. Agonism and anarchism: fundamental overlaps

The ethical implications of spatializing practices are now highly visible, and it has become apparent that ‘space’ as an institution must be responsive to a critical moral assessment, due to its impact on how political agents relate to one another. Before commencing with an analysis of agonistic spatiality along the previously discussed lines the study will briefly discuss the fundamental overlaps between anarchist philosophy and agonistic political theory.

3.1 The freedom of the ancient and the freedom of the modern

It is one of agonism’s fundamental concerns to strike a balance between what Mouffe calls the freedom of the ancients and the freedom of the moderns;⁵⁷⁵ that is, between the positive republican conception of liberty as one’s capacity to participate in the public life of the community, as opposed to the negative liberal notion of freedom as the individual’s right not to be interfered

⁵⁷³ Ibid., 64.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁷⁵ Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 2005), 62.

with.⁵⁷⁶ A contemporary variation of this ethico-political struggle still resonates in the debates between cosmopolitans and communitarians, with fault lines running between universal notions of *right* on the one side, and ethical conceptions of the *good* on the other.⁵⁷⁷ Agonism demonstrates a critical awareness that both facets of freedom need to be articulated and practiced simultaneously by a modern interpretation of radical democracy: “One task of a modern democratic political philosophy, as I see it, is to provide us with a language to articulate individual liberty with political liberty so as to construe new subject positions and create different citizens’ identities”.⁵⁷⁸ The challenge to cope with is really the re-invention of the political agent and the common good alike. As of the latter Mouffe suggests that this “good which defines a political association as such”⁵⁷⁹ should be derived from *equality* and *freedom* as the central normative assertions of modern revolutionary politics.⁵⁸⁰ The postmodern agent, on the other side, needs to be conceived of as a de-centered and de-totalized agent whose subject-position is constituted by a multiplicity of hegemonic struggles.⁵⁸¹ The *universitas-societas-nexus* serves as the eventual point of convergence between both principles, and provides an outlet in which heterogeneous notions of freedom, namely liberal individualism on the one side and radical democratic citizenship on the other, can be exercised co-constitutively.⁵⁸²

It is not my intention to suggest that classical anarchism is equally capable of performing a sophisticated co-articulation of liberal and republican freedoms in the same way the much more recent agonistic branch of political thought is able to. In fact, certain branches of anarchist thought, i.e. Kropotkin’s biological rationalism or Stirner’s aggressive egoism⁵⁸³, might even stand in detrimental

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., 30.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., 56 f.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁸² Ibid., 66.

⁵⁸³ Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Boston: Extending Horizon Books, 2005); and Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*.

opposition to the agonistic project. Yet it is indisputable that a congeniality between agonism and anarchism exists, and that a fair amount of prominent 19th century anarchists did indeed embark on a quest identical to the agonistic one. Proudhon and Bakunin addressed similar problems by means of raising questions in regards to socio-political assemblages that would permit for the parallel articulation of individuality and communality in a mutually constitutive, non-hierarchical way.

For Proudhon it is an inherent social individualism that constitutes the basic ontological framework of a mutualist society. This account puts a strong emphasis on the autonomy of socio-political agents and identifies the individual as originator and ward of society.⁵⁸⁴ Proudhon's agonistic side is most certainly not fully developed, and on occasion he even demonstrates strong liberal tendencies. *The General Idea of Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, for example, advocates for a society that is governed by a market-logic, and in which governance, government, and public law ought to be replaced with contracts, negotiated individually between subjects.⁵⁸⁵ Despite the admittedly strong focus on the realization of subjective freedoms Proudhon is by no means a methodological individualist. Quite on the contrary he demonstrates a critical awareness that both, liberal and republican liberties must coincide, rather than combat each other. The fact that his social-individualist ontology unfolds in concentric circles demonstrates his attempt to reconcile republican virtue with liberal autonomy: justice does not derive from a distant and abstract principle such as god or reason, but is rather constituted by the conflation of subjective notions of morality. Individuals do not exist in isolation or solitude but are deeply rooted in various social context such as families, workshops, economic classes, nations, states, etc. - the second circle. The third layer comprises of the norms and institutions which have been developed within a specific social setting. These practices feed back towards the individual and shape the moral instinct of the person - a process that can be beneficial, but equally derogatory to the

⁵⁸⁴ Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 91.

⁵⁸⁵ Proudhon, *The General Ideal of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, 234.

development of moral instincts.⁵⁸⁶

Bakunin, significantly more collectivist than Proudhon, focuses predominantly on the emancipatory potential of communities and associations.⁵⁸⁷ In *Marxism, Freedom, and the State* he remarks that even strong and intelligent individuals cannot escape the attractions of solidarity⁵⁸⁸ and that collectives must realize “the liberty which consists in the full development of all the material, intellectual and moral powers which are to be found as faculties latent in everybody, the liberty which recognized no other restrictions than those which are traced for us by the laws of our own nature”.⁵⁸⁹ In a complementary way the *Revolutionary Catechism* defines ‘justice as equality’⁵⁹⁰ and freedom as the “absolute rejection of every authority including that which sacrifices freedom for the convenience of the state”.⁵⁹¹ The tension that emerges between the necessity of communal life on the one side, and the invoked notion of freedom and justice on the other, demonstrates the latent agonism inherent in Bakunin’s philosophy: despite the fact that groupism is a constitutive element of political life it cannot be mobilized as an excuse to subordinate the individual to an abstract notion of the common good. Vice versa individual agents have every right to claim extensive individual liberties, but only if certain ethico-political principles (c.f. justice and equality) are maintained. This critical awareness that humans are not only “the most individualistic being[s] on earth”⁵⁹² but also “the most social”⁵⁹³ ones does not automatically turn Bakunin into a proto-agonist, yet again, it demonstrates a resemblance between agonism and certain strands of anarchism.

⁵⁸⁶ Prichard, “Justice, Order and Anarchy”, 630.

⁵⁸⁷ Michael Bakunin, “The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State”, in *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings*, ed. A. Lehning (New York: Grove Press, 1974), 203.

⁵⁸⁸ Bakunin, *Marxism, Freedom and the State*, 16.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁹⁰ Bakunin, “Revolutionary Catechism”.

⁵⁹¹ cited in Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 277.

⁵⁹² Bakunin, *Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism*.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*

3.2 The critique of rationalism and liberal neutrality

A second fundamental concern of the agonistic project is the reconceptualization of democracy beyond the prevalent accumulative and deliberative models. Mouffe's primary concern in that regard is the striking absence of a genuine *political* moment, and a low susceptibility towards antagonistic group-relations in both models of democracy. While accumulative models collapse too easily into narratives of a universal economic rationality, deliberative democracy clings to a notion of a supposedly equally rational and universal ethicality.⁵⁹⁴ Despite this rejection of mainstream liberal democracy Mouffe cannot be labeled an anti-liberal. What motivates her criticism is an attempt to refine the liberal project's susceptibility towards the importance of group-based identities, and to push the tradition beyond narrow notions of modern rationalism and *presumed* universality.⁵⁹⁵

Similar traits of skepticism against liberal claims of rationality and presumed universality are echoed in certain quarters of the anarchist tradition. What unites Bakunin and Proudhon is a shared hesitance to buy into clichés of rationality and universality. Bakunin's collectivist approach highlights the context-specificity of political, social, and ethical knowledge: agents are embedded in a community of practice which fosters the development of their latent faculties and enables individuals to access the material world that surrounds them through various signifiers and layers of meaning. This imperative of community-centrism is made explicit in *The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State*, where Bakunin postulates that humans positioning themselves outside society cannot be considered free, since humanization and emancipation will only take place within the specific setting of a societal context.⁵⁹⁶ In that regard Bakunin opts for a rather Hegelian interpretation of *reason* in which transcendence and far-reaching

⁵⁹⁴ Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 13.

⁵⁹⁵ George Crowder, "Chantal Mouffe's Agonistic Democracy", presented to the *Australasian Political Studies Association*-conference, University of Newcastle, 25-27 September 2006: 4; and Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, 124; and Chantal Mouffe, "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism", *Political Science Series* 72, ed. Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS), Department of Political Science. (Vienna. IHS, 2000), 9 f.

⁵⁹⁶ Bakunin, "The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State", 271.

claims of universality have very little buy. The answer to the question of what constitutes the good life or the ideal community is given by means of referring to the “actuality of the ethical ideals”⁵⁹⁷ and not to supposedly rational and universal claims of what is either *good* or *right*.

Politics, for Proudhon, is fundamentally unconcerned with questions of rationality and universality, or, in that regard, with any attempt of navigating towards an original position or an argument that nobody could reasonably object. Proudhon’s anarchism emphasizes in a very agonistic fashion the ever-present possibility of conflict and tension that is immanent to human affairs. Politics is the realm of ongoing struggles between a vast number of antinomic positions of which the tension between authority and liberty is the most fundamental one.⁵⁹⁸ This tension, which prescribes the essence of political life and defines the ontology of society’s vast antipodal fabric, can be managed and balanced, yet it evades its ultimate resolution in the form of a synthesis or a liberal original position.⁵⁹⁹ Practical reason does then not consist of the encirclement of neutral realms, rational discourse, or universal truths but can rather be found in the attempt to maintain a certain balance between opposing, antagonistic, or even hostile principles and poles: “For Proudhon the exercise of practical reason involves finding a *temporary balance* of the two terms in ideas and practice, a balance that will be *relative to time and place*. Thus right and duty are correlative, commutative terms and their temporary balance is an immanent justice”.⁶⁰⁰ In an almost agonistic sense Proudhon approximates the principle of hegemony. Political enterprises are not characterized by their attempt to realize presumably universal claims about absolute truths, since perceptions of ‘truth’ and ‘rationality’ are in themselves discursive products that change their appearance, depending on the hegemonic configuration from which they ultimately spring. The struggle over hegemony, and the temporary establishment of hegemonic

⁵⁹⁷ Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, §257.

⁵⁹⁸ Alex Prichard, “What can the absence of anarchism tell us about the history and purpose of International Relations?”, *Review of International Studies* 37 (2011): 1657 f.

⁵⁹⁹ Prichard, *Justice, Order, Anarchy*, 101 f.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

practices which preclude any final word on the notion of the good life, is a defining criterion for agonism and anarchism alike.

3.3 The constitutive function of power

Deriving from the Schmittian notion that politics is essentially based on us-them-divisions and patterns of exclusions, a nexus between power, hegemony, and legitimacy emerges. While deliberative democrats often perceive of power-relations as a threat to democratic authenticity, agonism defines them as being constitutive of social relations.⁶⁰¹ Struggles over hegemony between clashing centers of power create an ever changing political environment in which stability, or a permanent balancing of forces remains unattainable.⁶⁰² A condition labeled as the “coming to terms with the lack of final ground and the undecidability that pervades every order”.⁶⁰³ Hegemonic struggles serve as structuring mechanisms for the establishment of temporary orders in an essentially foundationless social setting: “Every order is the temporary and precarious articulation of contingent practices. Things could always have been otherwise and every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities. It is always the expression of a particular configuration of power relations”.⁶⁰⁴ At this point the connection between objectivity, legitimacy, and relations of power becomes apparent: identities and interests are neither formed in a vacuum, nor are they defined in an *a priori* like fashion prior to an agent’s appearance on the political scene. Instead they are configured, molded, and conditioned by criss-crossing, overlapping, and competing power-relations.⁶⁰⁵ Legitimacy on the other hand can simply be defined as successful, and socially accepted power.⁶⁰⁶ Due to power’s constitutive

⁶⁰¹ Mouffe, “Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism”, 14.

⁶⁰² Chantal Mouffe, “Democracy in a Multipolar World”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 37, no. 3 (2009): 549.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁵ Mouffe, “Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism”, 14.

⁶⁰⁶ Crowder, “Chantal Mouffe’s Agonistic Democracy”, 9.

role it needs to be understood as central, not alien, to political and democratic processes.⁶⁰⁷

Mouffe's emphasis on the centrifugal, potentially excluding, and decisionist components of power fits squarely into the anarchist tradition, yet her insistence on its ontological significance reveals once again certain overlaps with Proudhon's political theory. In the *Little Political Catechism* Proudhon formulates a theory of relational power and explains how force is constitutive of, and immanent to, the socio-political realm. His answer to the question "what constitutes the reality of social power?" is short and rather straight forward: "The collective force".⁶⁰⁸ He proceeds further and gives a more detailed definition of the quality of collective force: "*Any being, and by that I mean only what exists, what is reality, not a phantom, a pure idea, possesses in itself, to whatever degree, the faculty or property, as soon as it finds itself in the presence of other beings, of beings able to attract and be attracted, to repulse and be repulsed, to move, to act, to think, to PRODUCE [sic!], at the very least to resist, by its inertia, influences from the outside. The faculty of property, one calls force*".⁶⁰⁹ This short paragraph makes two important statements about the ontological significance of power in relation to politics: first and foremost, force cannot be found in the realm of transcendence. Proudhon stresses power's actuality, which is closely tied to the physical presence of a force-wielding agent. The material existence of "what is reality", and the possibility to generate power/force, are hence inseparable intertwined. The second insight concerns the strict relationality of force: the force produced by social agents manifests itself 'as soon as it finds itself in the presence of other beings'. Social, political, and economic activities make it then possible to comprehend and experience power - power does not speak for itself, but has to be made up through human interactions. Consequently it can only be understood adequately in the context and by virtue of the presence of other forces. A political world devoid of power-relations would then be impossible to

⁶⁰⁷ Mouffe, "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism", 14.

⁶⁰⁸ Proudhon, "Little Political Catechism", 654.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid. - emphasis added.

comprehend. The existence of power-relations, its strict relationality, and its inherently constituent capacity define the nature of politics. The presence of force has nothing to do with the absence of democratic authenticity, but is rather the precondition for possessing agentic capacities.

4. Agonistic international politics

After having outlined the fundamental overlaps between anarchism and agonism the chapter will commence with an institutional moral assessment of agnostic spatiality. Analogous to the discussion of institutions and responsibility in section *two* it is asked what specific type of ethos is conveyed by agonism's ordering principle (and normative vision) of the pluriverse.

4.1 Transnational order in the pluriverse

In response to the task of institutionalizing an agonistic regime of global reach Mouffe mobilizes again a Schmittian concept: the so called *pluriverse*.⁶¹⁰ The *pluriverse* is a reaction to the increasingly forceful dynamics of neoliberal globalization and their potentially homogenizing, mainly market-driven approaches to politics. Such neoliberal one-size-fits-all solutions serve as potential incubators for essentialist forms of identification (i.e. nationalism or religious extremism), whereas regime-pluralism is supposed to prevent the emergence of such fundamentalisms: in order to “create channels for the legitimate expression of dissent, we need to envisage a *pluralistic* world order constructed around a certain number of great spaces and genuine cultural poles”.⁶¹¹

As a problem-solving mechanism the *pluriverse* has the purpose to institutionalize dissent, and to make sure that ‘globalization from above’ remains both challengeable and negotiable.⁶¹² Within this framework political power is distributed among large, regional units, that are grouped around diverging cultural

⁶¹⁰ Chantal Mouffe, “Schmitt’s Vision of a Multipolar World Order”, *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 104, no. 2 (2005): 249.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁶¹² *Ibid.*

practices.⁶¹³ Settling for a more universal ordering principle, i.e. that of a global cosmopolitan regime, is rejected by Mouffe since it would assert liberalism's superiority over competing modes of social organization.⁶¹⁴

While a centralized ordering force is absent from the pluriverse, a normative consensus based on the ethico-political principles of *democracy* and *human rights* is supposed to govern the relationship between cultural blocs. These principles serve as the smallest common denominator between political communities, and can be interpreted in a variety of ways.⁶¹⁵ Democracy, for example, may be practiced in either representative or direct-democratic ways.⁶¹⁶ Human rights could either lay their focus on individual autonomy or collective self-determination respectively.⁶¹⁷ Questions concerning the nature of the 'good life' can then be addressed in multiple ways - yet: a set of minimal, non-negotiable ethico-political principles remains, and serves as the yardstick for measuring the amount of freedom a political community is capable of providing. Only a community able to secure a person's dignity can count as 'free': "a political form of society would need to be informed by a set of values whose role in that regime corresponds to that played in liberal democracy by the notion of human rights".⁶¹⁸ What the *pluriverse* seeks to offer is the co-existence of *functional equivalents*, namely culturally specific answers to the question how democracy and human rights are supposed to be practiced.⁶¹⁹

4.2 Scrutinizing agonistic spatiality: reproducing the 'territorial trap'

What Mouffe proposes for the international realm is a form of civilizational or cultural multipolarity that advances a model of hegemony and power organized around cultural attributes. This type of multipolarity is grouped

⁶¹³ Mouffe, "Democracy in a Multipolar World", 553.

⁶¹⁴ Chantal Mouffe, "Which world order: cosmopolitan or multipolar?", *Ethical Perspectives* 15, no. 4 (2008): 465.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 466.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 462.

⁶¹⁷ Mouffe, "Democracy in a Multipolar World", 558.

⁶¹⁸ Mouffe, "Which world order", 456.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 457.

“around a certain number of great spaces and genuine cultural poles”⁶²⁰ and strives for a pluralist order in which large regional units, which are characterized by their internal struggles over hegemony, coexist.⁶²¹ Organizing the dealings between hegemonically defined political communities in this particular way is supposed to prevent what Schmitt has labeled an “international civil war”.⁶²² The “universalist approach exacerbates (...) antagonism”, while the “multipolar world order will not eliminate conflict, but the conflict in question will be less likely to take antagonistic forms”.⁶²³ Arriving at a fragile equilibrium, preferably managed and policed by a super-power-like agent, is the clear aim of this particular configuration.

The order imagined is, however, far from novel or innovative and mimics instead the current Westphalian principle. What changes is the applied geopolitical perspective and the mode of spatiality: in Mouffe’s reading international political space would no longer be defined alongside the lines of Westphalian sovereignty, but rather according to cultural signifiers and hegemonic practices. One of the novelties one will encounter is that the environment is not a purely statist one anymore. Instead of disappearing completely states get absorbed into hegemonic blocs, whose character is in turn defined by cultural commonalities and a shared center of successful power. The spatial vision for the global political plane that is articulated under the heading of agonistic pluralism is very similar to the project exposed by the classical realist school of thought. Even the justifications for the respective pluralistic geopolitical visions overlap significantly. To reiterate: Mouffe argues that universal visions of liberal morality have no place in global political affairs. Any attempt to overwrite plurality with uniformity is dangerous and destined to fail “since the unification of the world under a single system can only suscite violent reactions”.⁶²⁴ As demonstrated

⁶²⁰ Mouffe, “Schmitt’s Vision of a Multipolar World Order”, 251.

⁶²¹ Mouffe, “Which world order”, 466.

⁶²² Mouffe, “Schmitt’s Vision of a Multipolar World Order”, 249.

⁶²³ Mouffe, “Which world order”, 466 f.

⁶²⁴ Chantal Mouffe, “The limits of John Rawl’s pluralism”, *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 4, no. 2 (2005): 230.

extensively in the previous section the reason for this potentially violent reactions is “the lack of ‘agonistic channels’ for the expression of grievances”, which “tends to create the conditions for the emergence of antagonisms” that can take “extreme forms and have disastrous consequences”.⁶²⁵

A similar line of reasoning can be encountered in Morgenthau’s *Six Principles of Political Realism*. The angle through which international affairs is approached is admittedly a very different one: Morgenthau is more concerned with foreign policy than with transnational democratic practices. Yet, the logic that justifies the primacy of politics over ethics mirrors Mouffe’s argument. Morgenthau claims that “universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract universal formulation but that they must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place.”⁶²⁶ Other than the individual the state “has not right to let its moral disapprobation of the infringement of liberty get in the way of successful political action”.⁶²⁷ This implied primacy of situational politics over universal moral considerations has two purposes, of which the first one comprises of the maintenance of the national interest, which is defined as securing the state’s survival by means of amassing power. The second, and in the context of this chapter more important one, is the stabilization of the multilateral system and the prevention of an imperialist crusader-mentality, driven by convictions of moral superiority: “All nations are tempted (...) to clothe their own particular aspirations and actions in the moral purpose of the universe”.⁶²⁸ A prudent foreign policy refrains from deriving its directives from the realm of morality: ethics and the pursuit of supposedly universal moral objectives are misplaced when inserted into an international political context. Political action in the international realm is defined by its pursuit for power. A limitation to this very specific objective is not only the precondition for the security of the individual state, but also serves as a

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

⁶²⁶ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 12.

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

safeguard-mechanism that prevents the international from being thrown off its inherent balance: “On the other hand it is exactly the concept of interest defined in terms of power that saves us from the *moral excess* and that political folly”. And further: “For if we look at all nations, our own included, as political entities pursuing their respective interests defined in terms of power, we are able to do *justice* to all of them”.⁶²⁹

Despite the fact that Mouffe and Morgenthau are concerned with the construction of very different political projects they justify their respective spatial visions by rather similar lines of reasoning and arrive at comparable ends. Plurality is a form of justice, and the spatiality of the global political sphere needs to be a fragmented one, since only this configuration is able to channel the inherently conflict-laden nature of politics and helps to prevent the emergence of large scale international conflicts. Claims of universality that are made on supposedly moral grounds are counterproductive to this endeavor. Morgenthau’s multilateral system is then populated by power-maximizing states that try to realize their respective national interest. Morality is not supposed to creep into the foreign policy register of states, since this might lead to imperial aspirations and a severe disturbance of the system’s balance. In Mouffe’s pluriverse states are superseded by large regional blocs, defined by cultural affiliations and similarities. This specific form of multipolarity is supposed to constitute “an alternative to American unilateralism”⁶³⁰ which poses the danger of cultural imperialism in the guise of a forceful universalization of liberal values. In order to create room for counter-hegemonic projects frontiers need to be multiplied so that potentially antagonistic encounters are turned into agonistic ones.⁶³¹

A specific problem that emerges in this context is not the construction of counter hegemonic projects *per se*, but rather their spatial appearance. Agonism claims to radicalize democracy by means of pluralizing hegemonic struggles.⁶³²

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 12 f.

⁶³⁰ Paulina Tambakaki, “Cosmopolitanism or agonism? Alternative visions of world order”, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 12, no. 1 (2009): 103.

⁶³¹ Ibid.

⁶³² Crowder, “Chantal Mouffe’s Agonistic Democracy”, 4.

Yet, in order to realize this plurality of agonistic encounters on the domestic level an inherently conservative international political spatiality is proposed. Mouffe, driven by her justified rejection of cosmopolitan universalism, drifts towards the other extreme of the political spectrum and advocates a communitarian-style international system that is organized around cultural signifiers and locks democratic practices away behind large, regional hegemonic centers. This project appears rather familiar and resembles Huntington's vision for the post-Cold-War era in which political cleavages run alongside cultural lines.

The inherent conservativeness of the pluriverse reproduces what Agnew has termed the *territorial trap*. Agnew points out that this trap comprises of three elements, that is *first* the complete overlap between territorial space and sovereign space, *second* the emergence of strong binary divisions in the form of a domestic/foreign or national/international polarities, and *third* a hegemonic image of the state which serves as a container for society.⁶³³ Agonism does of course not reproduce the 'territorial trap' literary since it is not primarily concerned with territorial notions of space. Yet it still favors a certain spatial image of international politics which represents non-territorial or structural space.⁶³⁴ This structural space exists by virtue of power-relations, struggles over hegemony, and shared cultural principles within the large regional units that constitute the pluriverse.⁶³⁵ A *trap* in the form of spatial fixity and exclusivity is indeed reproduced, although the adjective *territorial* is certainly misplaced - *spatial trap* might be more suitable in that regard.

How does the *territorial/spatial trap* then resonate in agonism's international political project? In terms of the first claim - the identity of sovereignty and spatiality - Agnew diagnoses a number of effects on the formation of agency in the international realm: (1) identities are viewed exclusively in state-territorial terms;⁶³⁶ (2) this separation leads to a universality/inferiority polarity that matches

⁶³³ Agnew, "The Territorial Trap", 59.

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 55.

⁶³⁵ Mouffe, "Democracy in a Multipolar World", 549.

⁶³⁶ Agnew, "The Territorial Trap", 62.

other binaries such domestic/foreign, inside/outside, or politics/force;⁶³⁷ (3) the historically contingent practice of statism is naturalized and viewed as being the only viable form of political organization.⁶³⁸ Despite the fact that agonism exposes a non-territorial and post-statist outlook on international affairs it reproduces all of these effects. An agent's identity within the pluriverse is characterized by a high degree of exclusivity due to the fact that it is produced and confined within hegemonic blocs. Struggles over hegemonic interpretations carry on within these respective blocs, yet, in opposition to other large regional units identity is always narrated in the form of *one* type of successful power. The pluriverse hence leads to a form of *representational hegemony* in which individual agents are perceived of *as if* they belong to a relatively closed political community. Although the fault-lines do not necessarily run between notions of universality vs. inferiority politics can be practiced only *within* given hegemonic spaces *not across* them. An inside/outside polarity emerges and Mouffe herself is tempted to proclaim "the conditions are very different in the domestic and the international domains".⁶³⁹ Agonism is ill-equipped to theorize the emergence of transnational political practices capable of transcending these hermetic notions of space. This is due to the (alleged) fact that the "kind of 'conflictual consensus' based on divergent interpretations of shared ethico-political principles that is necessary for the implementation of an agonistic model of liberal democracy cannot be expected at the global level".⁶⁴⁰ Politics across autonomous regional blocs can only be practiced on the basis of an equilibrium of forces which institutionalize in a new system of international law.⁶⁴¹ Yet it can never be materialized as an agonistic encounter between individual agents and or groups that don't define the hegemonic identity of the bloc at a given moment. In the same way the state is exaggerated by classical/territorial geopolitics the agonistic pluriverse fetishizes the struggle over hegemony. The former perceives of the state as being without

⁶³⁷ Ibid., 63.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., 64.

⁶³⁹ Mouffe, "Democracy in a Multipolar World", 553.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁴¹ Mouffe, "Schmitt's Vision of a Multipolar World Order", 249.

alternative since it is the only body capable of providing security for its inhabitants. Similarly the pluriverse is the only form of organization capable of performing a *Hegung des Krieges* (containment of war)⁶⁴², since it prevents the uncontrolled multiplication of hegemonic struggles, and confines them within “several big regional units with their different cultures and values”.⁶⁴³ Historically contingent cultural practices are naturalized, and the pluriverse, which fosters a coexistence of political blocs, is the only viable regime for organizing the contact points between them: the pluriverse is “unavoidable”⁶⁴⁴ in the same way the state is. The conceptual authority of ‘the struggle over hegemony’ is blind to the fact that plenty of socio-political associations are not necessarily interested in attaining hegemony in the first place. This fixation impoverishes politics, since it reduces its essence to one very specific type of strive. A politics of ‘the everyday’, which has important structural and productive effects on the production of geopolitical outcomes is neglected, since agonism aims loses sight of processes situated on lower, i.e. local levels.

In terms of his second claim, that is the emergence of strong binary divisions such as domestic/foreign or national/international, Agnew stresses that these divisions are purely conceptual and do not necessarily match corresponding empirical realities. The ‘domestic’ has never been completely separated from the ‘foreign’, and the ‘national’ has always interacted with the ‘international’. Mobilizing binaries in order to allude to the distinctiveness of socio-political realms is misleading since it suggests the existence of a closure that has never really existed. Agnew suggests instead that the “domestic/foreign opposition constitutes a shifting interaction rather than a fixed polarity”.⁶⁴⁵ Moving back to agonism’s international political project it becomes apparent that the pluriverse is incapable of articulating these shifting interactions. International politics is not

⁶⁴² Ibid.

⁶⁴³ Mouffe, “Democracy in a Multipolar World”, 553.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., 556.

⁶⁴⁵ Agnew, “The Territorial Trap”, 67.

perceived of as taking place on a spectrum whose respective ends are constituted by relative closure and relative openness. Mouffe rather opts for a fixed polarity that emerges by virtue of the existence of multiple cultural spaces. In following Derrida agonism perceives political identities as negative identities. Negative, in this context, refers to the fact that they can only come into existence after the demarcation from a constitutive outside. According to Derrida the creation of an identity implies the establishment of difference, which is often done on the basis of a hierarchy. Every identity is then relational and based upon an affirmation of difference as the precondition for its existence.⁶⁴⁶ The language invoked by Mouffe - the vocabulary of hegemonic poles, great regional spaces, genuine cultural blocs⁶⁴⁷ - bolsters this claim and reinforces the narrative of closure and distinctiveness. The various shades and hues of social life, the chasms of politics, are only visible within the confinements of the a cultural bloc. Only there subject-positions can be formed through nodal points that represent the various hegemonic clashes within the demos. These practices do not transpire into the pluriverse, the realm of necessity, which is concerned with a *Hegung des Krieges*, not with the formation of identities. In the pluriverse identities are always already established. The pluriverse arranges contact points, but it does not define their appearance. Consequently the 'domestic' is very distinct from the 'foreign', and the 'national' hardly communicates with the 'international' other than through hegemonic cultural representations.

Agnew's last point refers to the subordination of society to the state, or, in the case of agonism, to emerging centers of cultural hegemony which homogenize internal diversity. Mouffe remarks that a hegemonic bloc is characterized by its ability to successfully legitimize a specific form of social power. The power-legitimacy nexus is not problematic *per se* and is also invoked by a number of anarchists, most notably P.J. Proudhon. Problems start to surface

⁶⁴⁶ Chantal Mouffe, "Politics and Passions - The Stakes of Democracy", *CSD Perspectives*, ed. Centre for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster (London: CSD, 2002), 8; and Mouffe, *On the Political*, 15.

⁶⁴⁷ Mouffe, "The limits of John Rawls's pluralism", 231.

when successful power is projected as a unitary representation of cultural identity by one hegemonic sphere onto another. The *representation* of hegemony towards other regional blocs fails to reflect the plurality of agonistic struggles within the ‘domestic’ sphere. Within this sphere “adversaries fight each other because they want their interpretation to become hegemonic”⁶⁴⁸, yet, this struggle within the bloc is not necessarily visible for outsiders. The representation towards other actors in the pluriverse, the outside, does not reflect the plurality of agonistic encounters on the inside. A regional bloc is a hegemonic force and can hence only represent a single type of successful social power. The pluriverse exposes traits of methodological nationalism, since it traps society within the structural confinements of cultural space. Mouffe claims to delineate the conditions for a radical democratic project in which identities are formed through nodal points and a multiplicity of subject-positions shaped by a democratic matrix.⁶⁴⁹ She argues explicitly against the Enlightenment ideal of an undifferentiated human nature⁶⁵⁰, and yet sanctions at the very same time the potentially homogenizing framework of the pluriverse, which represents the content of a regional bloc *as if* it were unitary and homogenous. In the same way the state has been perceived of as an enabler of society and as the creator of individual rights,⁶⁵¹ hegemonic cultural centers generate agency in the pluriverse and allow domestic agonism to flow smoothly. Agnew notes that “prior to modern times society was rarely state defined. But in the 20th century ‘states are central to understanding of what a society is’”.⁶⁵² This statement applies to agonism as well, since hegemonic blocs are instrumental for its understanding of a society’s identity. To paraphrase Agnew: hegemonic blocs serve as the ‘containers of society’.⁶⁵³

⁶⁴⁸ Mouffe, “Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism”, 9.

⁶⁴⁹ Mouffe, *The return of the Political*, 18.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁵¹ Agnew, “The Territorial Trap”, 69.

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*, 70.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*

Analyzing agonistic spatiality through the narrative of the territorial trap has shown that Mouffe reproduces a decidedly modern pattern of political spatiality. The discussion has already problematize the prevalence of inside/outside and order/anarchy patterns, which give rise to an ethics of distance, or, as Odysseos has put it, an ethos of survival. Walker notes that “within the horizons constructed through this resolution, the search for a middle ground, for an ethical foundation for the society of states, must be perpetual wandering on a road that is closed at both ends”.⁶⁵⁴ Despite the fact that the agonistic project is not particularly interested in the relations between Westphalian spaces it still emulates this modern restlessness that is caught between particularity and universality. Mouffe’s agonism departs from a critique against the homogenizing forces of globalization, and responds to the liberal-universalist challenge with a pluralistic counter-project, which attempts to institutionally entrench the irreconcilability of diverging forms of life. Yet, instead of embracing the ensuing pluralism, it is swiftly curtailed and forced back into the spatial confinements of the agonistic pluriverse - a pluriverse which reproduces modern inside/outside patterns as it attempts to harmonize universality with particularity. Despite its supposedly radical underpinning the pluriverse simply mirrors contemporary international *relations*⁶⁵⁵ and suggests that what is going on within a hegemonic bloc (various struggles over hegemony) is fundamentally different from the relations between these blocs (a conflictual consensus). An ontology of danger and an ethos of survival prevail, while the ‘other’ continues to be perceived as a danger the needs to be kept at bay, mainly by means of mobilizing the spatial demarcations of the pluriverse. Responsibility exists only towards agents that reside on the ‘inside’ of a hegemonic bloc - towards the ‘outside’ responsibility is reduced to the obligation of maintaining distance, and to accept the incompatibility of diverging lifestyles.

Does this analysis then suggest that agonism is inevitably lost in an ethos of survival which denies responsibility towards the ‘other’ across hegemonic blocs? Or is it possible to retain certain agonistic core tenants while

⁶⁵⁴ Walker, *Inside/Outside*, 72.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

circumnavigating some of the aforementioned dilemmas? In order to tackle this question it is necessary to have a brief look into the origins of the agonistic pluriverse.

4.3 Forget Schmitt: the dilemma of sovereignty

Mouffe's pluriverse is actually a Schmittian concept and can only be understood properly if read in the context of 'the political'. Schmitt was mainly focused on the vertical dimensions of the political process and emphasized properties such as necessity, rule, and authority.⁶⁵⁶ While the republican tradition of political thought highlights the potentially integrative function of antagonism, realists tend to conceive of conflict as a centrifugal force that leads towards exclusionary and hierarchical relations between agents.⁶⁵⁷ Politics is concerned with collective forms of identification, and the inevitable emergence of us/them patterns or friend/enemy dichotomies: "The political, as he [ed.: Schmitt] puts it, can be understood only in the context of the friend/enemy grouping, regardless of the aspects which this possibility implies for morality, aesthetics and economics".⁶⁵⁸ Politics is then the realm of decisions: of picking sides, concepts, enemies, and ideologies - every consensus that is achieved within a specific *in-group* ('us') is necessarily based on the exclusion of an *out-group* ('them'). If viewed in this narrative exclusion does not count as inherently undesirable but represents an entirely normal outcome of the political process.

Schmitt presents himself as a severe critic of liberal bourgeois attempts to make politics safe and to administer and regulate agency by means of bureaucratizing vast portions of social life.⁶⁵⁹ In its most essential terms his take on sovereignty and politics needs to be perceived of as an affirmation of constituent power which reveals itself, according to Schmitt, in the possibility of combat, the prospect and the finality of death⁶⁶⁰, the maintenance of a

⁶⁵⁶ Andrew Schaap, "Political Theory and the Agony of Politics", *Political Science Review* 5 (2007): 60.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ Mouffe, *On the Political*, 11.

⁶⁵⁹ Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, xv.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., xvii & 33.

certain way of life⁶⁶¹, and, last but not least, the demarcation of the collective *us* from the collective *them*. Schmitt's main concern is to salvage the *meaningfulness* of life through the preservation of collective forms of identification and the ever-presence of conflict and antagonism. A world that lacks these essential binaries, i.e. the friend-enemy distinction, is a world without politics and one that has lost any meaningful antithesis.⁶⁶² The mechanism invoked to produce this antithesis, which is always polemical and acts as the most essential type of demarcation, is 'the political'. Social life is essentially underpinned by sets of various binaries, for example profitability (economics), beauty (aesthetics), and goodness (ethics).⁶⁶³ Politics, however, which encompasses the political, is special to the extent that it produces the most basic and essential antipode in the form of collective enmity: "The specific distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy".⁶⁶⁴ Schmitt's take on decisionism has strong normative implications, and is not only a mere formality that separates a random in-group from another random out-group. The decision is a form of sovereignty and defines its own ethical fundament. It does so by means of articulating - with great clarity - how the good life, *our* good life, is supposed to appear in opposition to competing models of community, of *their* good life. The political emphasizes responsibility in the guise of demarcating and defending one's own lifeworld against its possible negation by intruders. It hence positions itself clearly against bourgeois ambiguity, liberal individualism, and their inherent skepticism towards collective forms of identification.

One of the core elements of the decision is its inherently independent and legitimately sovereign character. The decision's substance, the condition that defines the friend-enemy-criterion in the first place, "can neither be decided by a previously determined general norm nor by the judgement of a

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., xvi.

⁶⁶² Ibid., 35.

⁶⁶³ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.

disinterested and therefore neutral third party”.⁶⁶⁵ The decision on the political is non-generic and genuinely unbound by prior notions of legality, goodness, or profitability.⁶⁶⁶ Sovereignty is a creative void that creates context and withdraws from it at the very same time.

It is exactly this conflation of sovereignty and decisionism that needs to be problematized if one wishes to delineate an image of the international beyond the hegemonic constraints of the *pluriverse*. Schmitt’s attempt to salvage sovereign creativity (constituent power) from the crippling repetitiveness of law (constituted power) is indeed convincing. Possessing the ability to act in opposition to constituted power counts as a genuinely sovereign move and demonstrates the superiority of constituent power over constituted power. Yet, Schmitt’s conclusion, according to which the generative forces of constituent power are best affirmed through the sovereign act of the decision - enshrined in the figure of the state -, does not follow. Sovereignty understood as the realization of constituent power can be conceived devoid of a decisionist moment. Consequently the international can appear as a post-statist space which abandons the spatial notion of the pluriverse.

The moment of the decision is indeed the solution to a very specific dilemma that emerges for Schmitt in the context of sovereignty. The ability to act in an unbound, hence sovereign way trumps the dull repetitiveness of law and bureaucracy and affirms the generative potential of constituent power. Despite the fact that Schmitt champions certain unruly and archaic elements of life he is not willing to let them unfold freely and uncontrolled. Sovereignty and constituent power must define the essence of politics, and, at the same time, they need to be domesticated. Neither by law or bureaucracy of course, but by other means: *the decision*. The decision tames exactly the forces Schmitt freed in the first place, and it is his way out of a pit he dug himself into. The decision is dualistic in the way that it *affirms* and *monopolizes* constituent power

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., 27.

⁶⁶⁶ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, xiv.

synchronously. Schmitt's emphasize on the fact that the decision cannot be multiplied, and that only the sovereign has the right to decide, is really an artifice, a maneuver, a diversion that allows him to play out legalists against democrats. Against the legalists Schmitt fields constituent power. This is dangerous, however, since constituent power could also be wielded by a multitude. Invoking the political, and declaring at the same time that the decision cannot be multiplied but must reside with a centralized agent⁶⁶⁷, is his eventual turn against the democrats. Schmitt is indeed very conscious in terms of not letting constituent power, the force exalted by genuine sovereignty, remain unattended. Instead he attempts to shape and sculpt it, and then assigns it to the state: the sovereign decision, the ability to invoke constituent power for the purpose of deciding on the friend-enemy distinction, is the prerogative of the state.⁶⁶⁸

The *dilemma of sovereignty* (accentuating and hedging constituent power at the very same time) reveals that sovereignty (as a creative act) and authority (as the decision on the friend-enemy-divide) are really two separate elements and exist parallel in the sphere of politics - both elements can be combined, but do not have to.

Schmitt's take on the political arena is that of authority in which decisions are singular, absolute, final.⁶⁶⁹ However, as demonstrated previously the infusion of politics and sovereignty with authority is optional, and not predetermined. The general conflation of politics with centralized decision-making is indeed a deliberate and purely instrumental choice, and it attempts to strategically position the state as the *only* legitimate wielder of sovereign capacity. If Schmitt really wanted to preserve constituent power he could have done so by means of emphasizing the productive potential of a democratic multitude. But this would be entirely diametral to his anti-democratic and pro-statist agenda, which is inherently-problem solving, and deals first and

⁶⁶⁷ Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, xx.

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, xiv.

foremost with the question of legitimacy: how to *legitimize* the state's *supposed* (not actual!) status as *the* sovereign. As shown above sovereignty as the affirmation of constituent power ("Sovereign is he who decides on the exception"⁶⁷⁰) can perfectly well exist outside of a decisionist context (see also ch. VII on anarchist sovereignty). When Schmitt invokes authority and decisionism, and pitches both as being identical with sovereignty, he is not stating a fact but comes instead forward with a proposition: sovereignty *ought* to be perceived *as if* its essence is limited to the moment of deciding on the political. Emphasizing authority and decisionism as the bedrock of politics is instrumental in the *struggle over sovereignty*, mainly because the state is primarily defined by its ability to *demarcate*. As Schmitt notes himself: the high points of politics are "those moments in which the enemy is, in concrete clarity, recognized as the enemy".⁶⁷¹ This statement is exceptionally well phrased because it presents the state *as if* it were the sovereign by default, which is clearly not the case. The *dilemma of sovereignty* (again: accentuating and hedging constituent power synchronously) can be solved in at least two ways: one is statist, the other democratic. The specifically statist response is the mobilization of authority and decisionism, which serve as tools for performing the given task. What the statement then really celebrates is the state's ability to solve the dilemma of sovereignty by means of *demarcating* friend and enemy.

Schmitt's strong emphasis on demarcation is not a voluntary choice, but imposes itself as a necessity deriving from his fixation on the state. A state can only act as sovereign if it demarcates - its essence is indeed singularly defined by this very ability to tell the domestic from the foreign. The insistence on the fact that the decision cannot be pluralized⁶⁷² is then completely accurate, since it is one specifically statist way of embracing constituent power. Decisionism and demarcation does then not define the essence of sovereignty,

⁶⁷⁰ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 5.

⁶⁷¹ Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, xx.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*

but rather the nature of the state. In this context the claim that “the state presupposes the concept of the political”⁶⁷³ is again unveiled as a deception, since it suggests the existence of ‘the political’ prior to the state’s eclipse, and in the form of a meta-determinism defined by the nature of the political sphere. The political does indeed not precede the state, but is rather its co-constitutive feature. Both, the political and the state, are binaries: the decision divides into friends and enemies, the state separates the inside and the outside. As already demonstrated, decisions are specifically statist affirmations of sovereignty and constituent power. The state does *not* presuppose the concept of the political, the state *is* the political which exists as a specifically statist response to the dilemma of sovereignty. Schmitt’s initial claim, according to which a world that lacks the friend-enemy-distinction is a world without a meaningful antithesis⁶⁷⁴, suddenly appears in a different light. The supposedly substantial divide is neither integral to the articulation of a constituent moment, nor relevant for the exercise of sovereign force. If the meaningfulness of life would really be the criterion it could assert itself in various other, i.e. democratic, ways. Only the state would indeed suffer from this loss of a meaningful antithesis, since its very existence relies on the construction of hermetic binaries.

5. Conclusion: the pluriverse and the omniverse

In the wake of problematizing *agonistic spatiality* the assessment has revealed three important insights in regard to the *pluriverse*:

Firstly, it is questionable whether the pluriverse does indeed serve as Mouffe’s sought after, counter-hegemonic project that would be capable of containing the homogenizing influences of a single superpower by means of diffusing antagonism into agonism. As demonstrated, the pluriverse has initially been designed in order to organize the contact points between states. It is actually a specifically Westphalian way of maintaining those binaries

⁶⁷³ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., 35.

necessary for states to exist in the first place. The pluriverse does not diffuse antagonisms, it institutionalizes them.

Secondly, and in reference to the ethical consequences, the foregoing analysis has also demonstrated that the agonistic account of spatiality gives rise to an ethics of distance and an ethos of survival. Agonism's decidedly modern attempt to reconcile universality and particularity significantly limits the notion of responsibility towards the other, due to its division of the political plane alongside inside-outside-patterns. Deep ethical commitments are required only towards the inside. Towards the outside, and across hegemonic blocs, responsibility is reduced to the requirement of keeping ones distance, in an attempt to respect diverging forms of life (the aforementioned conflictual consensus).

Thirdly, the supposed necessity to conceive of constituent politics and sovereign action as necessarily hegemonic strives has been questioned through an engagement with the Schmittian roots of the pluriverse. The sovereign is indeed he who decides upon the exception. Sovereignty is the life-affirming power "to make something from that which is not something" and can thus not be subject to laid-down laws or liberal claims of a supposed universality.⁶⁷⁵ Yet, this momentum is not identical with the decision on 'the political', which is a predominantly statist reflex. If sovereignty is primarily characterized as an affirmation of constituent power, and if the friend-enemy-divide is only one highly specific way of performing this affirmation, the hermetic pluriverse is only one, highly state-specific, way of organizing the contact points between political communities. Being able to conceive of a sovereign and constituent movement outside the coercive corsets of either states or agonistic cultural blocs sheds light on political formations still capable of distinguishing between and inside and an outside, while refraining from pushing this logic to the extreme end of the friend/enemy divide. The separation of sovereign/constituent power from 'the political' (and the attached functions of

⁶⁷⁵ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, xxvii.

exceptionalism, decisionism and friend-enemy-dichotomies) reveals new perspectives in terms of imagining groupness outside of hegemonic practices as the singularly demarcating mechanisms.

These three issues are of particular importance when reconsidering the spatial ordering of the political plane, and the ensuing implications for ethical commitments in global affairs (in particular responsibility towards fellow political agents). Agonism does not offer a spatial project for the international capable of moving beyond the ethically problematic pluriverse as its chief ordering principle. Anarchist philosophy, on the other side, has already demonstrated its ability of being conducive to certain agonistic core tenants (c.f. VIII-3) and possesses the additional capacity of circumnavigating the pluriverse's shortcomings. What kind of geopolitical spaces (and eventually modes of responsibility towards the other) could a radical project of anarchist democracy envisage if it moved beyond a mode of agonistic spatiality whose ontological constitution rests fundamentally on the maintenance of friend/enemy binaries?

The point of departure for such a reformulation of political spatiality needs to start with the image of the pluriverse, this Schmittian invention later adopted by Mouffe for the purpose of keeping competing centers of hegemony (cultural blocs) apart. It has already been established earlier that the pluriverse is not only a mechanism destined to control the circulation and the quality of conflict. The pluriverse also results from the *dilemma of sovereignty*, which entails the necessity to accentuate and hedge constituent power synchronously. Schmitt pitches the state as the preferred political entity to perform this task, which leads, in terms of institutional and spatial configurations, to an assemblage of Westphalian polities on an international political level: the statist pluriverse as the principal mode of organization is born. Mouffe's motivation is quite similar and driven by comparable intentions, namely to protect political communities from liberalism's homogenizing tendencies. The centrality of groupism and the inevitability of conflict between political subjects is taken as an ontological given, which leads to the *a priori* foreclosure of a rational or universal (read: liberal)

consensus. The pluriverse functions as a mechanism to control the quality of conflicts and to prevent them from turning toxic. And it has, furthermore, the purpose of accentuating and hedging constituent power through the figure of the hegemonic bloc (Schmitt's corresponding entity is the state). Constituent power can only be mobilized properly within these blocs - outside of them constituted power prevails. Agonism's spatial project is hence designed as a divisive mechanism, destined to institutionalized a fragile truce among competing hegemonic centers. What becomes apparent immediately is the direct connection between attempts of salvaging constituent power, and the positioning of the ethically problematic pluriverse as a central ordering principle. There exists an evidently close relation between the ways in which constituent power is managed, and the emergence of differential political spaces - an insight already formulated in chapter II.

While the state and the hegemonic bloc count as the respective Schmittian and agonistic responses to the *dilemma of sovereignty*, it is the anarchist tradition of political thought which can offer an alternative answer to the question of how to accentuated and hedge constituent power synchronously: namely through the mobilization of natural groups and, more concretely, the deployment of *porous sovereignties*. The agentic figure of the *porous sovereign* affirms constituent power via acts of socio-political labour, while using natural groups as a temporary hedging vessel. Porous sovereignty hence affirms and contains constituent power, and it offers a specifically anarchist response to Schmitt's dilemma. This response has also spatial implications, and provides an alternative to the pluriverse.

The pluriverse is, by definition, a space or a gathering of 'many' political communities. In contrast to a political universe, which revolves around a singular center, the pluriverse knows multiple centers, either in the form of Westphalian polities or hegemonic blocs. Yet, the pluriverse of the agonistic guise also exposes some limiting qualities due to its narrow fixation on cultural spaces. This focus creates a strong and durable, allegedly necessary division of the political plane. And it institutionalizes us-them-divides along the lines of supposedly fixed, unalterable cultural practices. An anarchist approach to spatiality is instead

characterized by porosity. The principal collective agency is not the hermitically sealed cultural bloc, but rather an infinite set of permeable natural groups and porous sovereignties. The resulting spatial configuration is consequently that of an *omniverse*, which cannot be reduced to an assemblage of a few hegemonic centers. Such an *omniverse* acknowledges instead the diverging and non-homogenous ways of mobilizing constituent power, and it exposes susceptibility towards the production of global political outcomes by heterogenous sets of actors that operate within, across, and between states or cultural blocs.

1st ethical implication: 'groupism' and 'groupness'. An omniverse as the chief ordering principle for global politics supports the circumnavigation of groupism, which is inherent to Schmitt's statism and Mouffe's agonism. Both portray groupism not only as a necessity, but also as a virtue: by means of forming in- and out-groups political agents are actively involved in the construction of their collective identities, and in the affirmation of responsibility towards their communities. Binary identities create a "meaningful antithesis"⁶⁷⁶ without which communal life as such would lack any substance. Schmitt's and Mouffe's insistence on the virtues of grouped identities is in fact understandable, since it also affirms an agent's desire for structural control: through the symbolic division of vast political spaces into 'us' and 'them' - i.e. by means of defining how 'our' way of life is supposed to look like, and how it is qualitatively different from 'their' way of life - political subjects manage to generate themselves as mature agents, capable to make decisions and to endure their consequences. Groupism also circles back to the dilemma of sovereignty, since the demos constitutes itself by means of defining its own boundaries. Groupism is hence one possible form of accentuating and hedging constituent power. Problems emerge since groupism is also an essentialist approach to politics, one that portrays political communities *as if* they were relatively closed, homogenous entities. A groupist social ontology denotes "the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally

⁶⁷⁶ Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 35.

homogenous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis".⁶⁷⁷ While the *pluriverse* relies fundamentally on such groupist forms of spatialization, an *omniverse* provides a foil for the projection of collective identities in the form of groupness. Through the invocation of natural groups and porous sovereignties the image of a contextually fluctuating space emerges. This space's basic parameters are defined by productive processuality and configurative practices.⁶⁷⁸ The pluriverse curtails movement and aims at its incarceration behind the walls of groupist cultural blocs. The omniverse, on the other side, provides for political spaces where the performative aspects of group-making and syntheticity are central.

2nd ethical implication: the centrality of conflict. The omniverse provides proper outlets for the enactment of inevitably occurring tensions between social groups - quite similar to the pluriverse. As an institution it is chiefly concerned with arranging the contact points between structural spaces (i.e. natural groups and porous sovereignties) and the regulation of conflict between them. Chapter VII alluded to the centrality of antinomy in anarchist political thought: instead of evading or suppressing tensions, they are instead viewed as a vital part of communal life, and as a desired mechanism which prevents political structures from solidification. Every commitment towards constituent power requires an acknowledgement of the productive nature inherent to antinomic social relations.

Where the omniverse differs from the pluriverse is in regards to the desired spatial ordering of the political landscape. The omniverse is configured around institutionalized antinomy, the pluriverse opts instead for a set of agonistic principles. Agonism affirms the inevitability of competition and tension, while still engaging in attempts to make politics 'safe'. This happens through the dedication of zones in which conflict can take place without damaging

⁶⁷⁷ Brubaker, "Ethnicity without groups", 164; and Brubaker: "Neither individualism nor 'groupism'", 553.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

consequences. By means of containing issues worth fighting for, i.e. control over a cultural bloc, potentially conflictual behavior is locked away in the hermetically sealed container of hegemonic spaces. Struggles over hegemony are only possible within these discrete spaces - across them a conflictual consensus must prevail. For agonism the dangers of essentialism hence requires a pluriverse in order to keep struggling parties separated. Through the creation of distinct zones the mayor catalyst for struggle (the projection of hegemonic rule) has either been contained or removed.

The pluriverse and the omniverse give two different answers to the question of how to regulate the quality and the enactment of conflict. Furthermore, an anarchist approach to global politics must also be susceptible to the essentialist tendencies exalted by the pluriverse itself. The organizational principle of the cultural bloc is just another substantialist figure, charged with groupist assumptions on political agency, and hence unfit to manage the dangers of fundamentalist identities. What is required instead is a dynamic management of conflict - one that uses antinomy (not agonism) as a principle for governing the interplay between competing natural groups and porous sovereigns through mutualist practices. Anarchism also engages in efforts of removing potential reasons for essentialist struggles, since natural groups and porous sovereignties are not interested in hegemonic rule, but only in the sectoral projection of constituent power. The situation in the anarchist omniverse is quite different from the pluriverse since the principal agents, namely natural groups and porous sovereignties, do not compete over hegemonic control. Hegemony is a Westphalian principle, and affirms the universal domination of political spaces by a unitary agent. Instead of making attempts to manage such realms in their entirety, porous sovereignties project constituent power in a partial and synthetic fashion (see VII-4, "Elements of porous sovereignties"). This projection is still a competitive endeavor, and struggles must definitely be expected. Yet, as long as conflict follows mutualist principles the dangers of emerging essentialist forms of political identification are quite limited.

3rd ethical implication: beyond an ontology of danger. Lastly it is also of importance to acknowledge the agonistic pluriverse's tendency of cultivating an ontology of danger due to the reproduction of conservative patterns of realist spatiality. Earlier it has been noted that the ethics which underpin IR's contemporary normative vision of Westphalian spatiality are geared towards an ethos of survival, and revolve structurally around binaries such as inside/outside, order/anarchy, or self/enemy.⁶⁷⁹ The pluriverse, with its carefully separated cultural spaces, institutionalizes a narrative where politics can only be practiced within cultural blocs. On the 'inside' political subjects meet at eye-level and engage in the unhindered exercise of constituent social practices. 'Outside' of the cultural block one will find a qualitatively inferior realm whose prevailing practices can hardly be called political. The space 'in between' cultural blocs is a stale and stagnant environment, a place of constituted power and a forced consensus, one that derives its legitimacy from sheer necessity. The pluriverse pits politics against necessity, and it creates two types of political subjects: *the equal*, who resides inside one's own cultural bloc, and *the stranger*, whose mere existence is underpinned by the potentiality of substantial uncertainty and the prospects of violence and danger. This limiting (but supposedly necessary) division of political spaces prevents the full ethical realization of subjects by means of intercepting universal moral commitments towards *the other*.

Chapter IV explained the centrality of mutual recognition to mutualist anarchist thought, and it demonstrated why political subjects can only fully develop their potential through this particular politico-psychological mechanism. Accordingly, emancipatory justice is only realizable when individual agents are offered the opportunity to sense and experience their own personhood in and through the reflection by others: "Justice, I must repeat, is to sense our *ownness* through *the other*".⁶⁸⁰ Such a dual and reciprocal account of justice requires an active strive towards institutional and spatial arrangements in which individuals can retain their distinctness, while simultaneously encountering themselves

⁶⁷⁹ Odysseos, "Dangours ontologies", 404 f.

⁶⁸⁰ Proudhon, *Die Gerechtigkeit in der Revolution und in der Kirche*, I-183 - emphasis added.

through their *vis-a-vis*'s dignity. Only through unmediated and immanently productive processes is it possible to experience one's own dignity and personhood through the dignity and personhood of the other. Cultural blocs, however, initiate a durable and lasting closure of the political sphere. When the pluriverse solidifies it belongs to the system of the 'absolute' (c.f. ch. IV), which is severely reduced in its function to act as a recognition-facilitating platform. The result is a parochial pluralism and an ethical entrenchment in which novel, recognition-facilitating encounters become impossible. Political agents are trapped within their own cultural blocs, while the prospect of establishing politically productive ties with subjects residing in other, parallel structures is dramatically diminished.

The omniverse strives towards the realization of immanent justice, and attempts to overcome the system of the absolute, of transcendence, and representation. Its building-blocks - most notably porous sovereignties, as well as the principles of mutualism and antinomy - create outlets for the projection of constituent power between and across natural groups, and they provide for spatial configurations conducive to recognition-facilitating encounters. A conscious political agent will always prefer such immanent accounts of justice over transcendental ones. If one can experience his or her own dignity through unmediated encounters with others, and if systems of representation (i.e. the pluriverse) are not conducive towards this endeavor, it is highly applicable to cultivate immanent systems of justice that remove transcendental barriers and foster potentially limitless, socio-political encounters.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁸¹ Ibid., I-189 & I-191 ff.

CHAPTER NINE

IX | CONCLUSION: THE VIRTUES OF ANARCHISM

1. Anarchism in the context of International Relations Theory

The final chapter of the study provides a perspective on how IR-theory benefits from the mobilization of anarchist political thought. One question looming over the research-project since the very start was perhaps: why anarchism? Isn't anarchism contradictory to the study of international politics? Shouldn't anarchism focus on local actions and outcomes, micro-politics, and anti-politics? The answer to this question is certainly affirmative if one follows a narrow and orthodox understanding of IR, and frames it as a discipline exclusively concerned with phenomena produced by statist practices and coercive sovereignty. The anarchist tradition of political thought is indeed not particularly well equipped to offer a comprehensive theory of the interstate system which could move very far beyond a critique.

It is, however, much more useful to think of international politics in general, and the international in particular, not as a realm exclusively populated by the state-form - one of the core-issues the study seeks to promote. The international produces first and foremost a series of global political outcomes.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸² Barnett & Duvall, "Power in International Politics", 41.

While some of these outcomes can be traced back to the actions of states, others can be credited to the activities of actors dwelling above and beyond the Westphalian threshold. Confusion about the role of anarchism in IR emerges only if one conflates ‘the global’ with the interstate system.⁶⁸³ The latter is indeed populated by discrete, territorially defined spaces. The former, however, is constituted by a multiplicity of material and ideational forces, and rarely fits into a statist scheme.⁶⁸⁴ The ontological constitution of the global does hence not rely solely on the interstate system, which is only one among several elements of a complex, transnational, socio-political machinery. Neumann’s and Sending’s suggestion to conceive of international politics as a set of relations between polities, driven by governmentality instead of sovereignty, is indicative in that regard. The international then turns into a structure defined by power-relations, and it “generates different and changing practices of political rule (...) and agencies”.⁶⁸⁵

Anarchism might not be particularly well equipped to theorize upon the interactions between states. It is, however, almost predestined for understanding and explaining the emergence of global political spaces that are constituted by non-coercive forces. A widely shared commitment to non-domination obliges the anarchist tradition to conceive of the emergence of polities and political groupings under the absence of coercive mechanisms. This commitment to non-domination does, however, not entail a renunciation of power *per se*. Among classical authors it was Proudhon who embraced the idea of fundamentally constitutive power-relations (see ch. IV and V for a detailed discussion): “what constitutes the reality of social power?” he asks, and answers “the collective force”!⁶⁸⁶ This insight, in combination with a deeply rooted skepticism towards state-based politics and superimpositions, enables anarchism to construct political spaces outside the territory-coercion-nexus. The act-capacity of political

⁶⁸³ Cox, “The International in Evolution”, 515.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵ Neumann & Sending, “The International as Governmentality”, 677.

⁶⁸⁶ Proudhon, “Little Political Catechism”, 654.

groupings depends then on the condition to manage and mobilize any sort of power other than coercion. The potential effect on IR is clear: political space is framed outside the constraints of *coercive sovereignty*, and instead perceived of as structural, productive, and porous (ch. VII).

Against this background the study has posed three initial questions: *first*, can it be confirmed that constituent power is indeed inconsistently applied in IR-theory? *Second*, to what extent is the anarchist tradition of political thought capable of addressing a lack of constituent power in IR-theory? *Third*, to what extent might the co-mobilization of anarchist political theory and constituent power support the destabilization and reframing of IR's *grand themes*? The research-project has addressed and answered all of these questions and will now, by means of a conclusion, provide a synopsis of the findings through an emphasis of anarchism's substantial contributions to IR-theory. Analogous to Waltz' five 'virtues of anarchy' (ch. I) the conclusion presents the five 'virtues of anarchism'.

2. The virtues of anarchism in IR: five proposals

2.1 Towards a theory of constituent power in global politics

In regards to the *first* and *second* research-question the study has shown that over the past decades IR has developed an impressive conceptual toolkit which enables the discipline to study varying types of power, as well as their dispersion through the international system. Dahl's relational power approach argues that "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do".⁶⁸⁷ To this first layer of power - direct influence - Lukes has added a second and a third dimension: setting/structuring agendas, as well as shaping preferences.⁶⁸⁸ Barnett and Duvall parse the latter one into two more facets, namely structural and productive power.⁶⁸⁹ Last but not least one will

⁶⁸⁷ Dahl, "The Concept of Power", 202.

⁶⁸⁸ Lukes, "Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds", 477 ff.

⁶⁸⁹ Barnett & Duvall, "Power in International Politics", 43.

find a vast amount of post-structural takes on power which locate it in the realm of discourses, biopolitics, and the likes (ch. II and V).⁶⁹⁰

What is strangely absent from IR is an account of *constituent power* (ch. II). The effects of the “democratic forces of social transformation, the means by which humans make their own history”⁶⁹¹, and the attached capacity to act in a genuinely sovereign and autonomous way by making “something from that which is not something and thus is not subject to laid-down laws”⁶⁹² have not been systematically addressed by the discipline.⁶⁹³ IR treats constituent power as a prerogative of ‘the domestic’, the realm of genuine politics. ‘The international’, the realm of anarchy and necessity, must however bow to the structural constraints of uncertainty, which forces politics into a sterile set of pre-constituted foreign-policy operations.

As a way out of this dilemma the study suggested to pay heightened attention to Proudhon’s theory of *natural groups* and the attached concept of *social force* (ch. IV and V). It was argued that political processes are generated by proto-polities which impose a certain degree of coherency upon themselves. Natural groups can be found in almost any socio-political domain, i.e. families, workshops, battalions, unions, whole industries, and even states and empires. The most important aspect in that regard is every group’s potential ability to wield a certain degree of constituent power through the projection of *social force*. Social force was further divided into material and ideational properties, which exist by virtue of agglomeration and commutation (ch. V). The difference between ‘the absolute’ (constituted power) and ‘progress’ (constituent power) has been extensively addressed by Proudhon in *Philosophy of Progress* (ch. IV).⁶⁹⁴ In combination with the theory of natural groups it becomes a powerful device which traverses the domestic/international binary, and helps to assess the diverging effects of constituent power in international politics.

⁶⁹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion (London: Penguin Books, 1994).

⁶⁹¹ Hardt, “Three Keys to Understanding Constituent Power”, vii-viii.

⁶⁹² Schmitt, *Political Theology*, xxvii.

⁶⁹³ Patberg, “Constituent Power beyond the State”, 225.

⁶⁹⁴ Proudhon, *The Philosophy of Progress*, 10.

2.2 Complex ontologies: the deep anarchy of the global

In regards to the *third* research question the study suggest to direct IR's focus of investigation towards certain anarchist core-themes, i.e. the role of *constituent power* and *natural groups* in world politics. This will not only alter the disciplines view in regard to key concepts such as sovereignty and anarchy (ch. VII), but raises additional questions about ontological core assumptions (ch. VI). Jackson and Nexon demonstrated IR's deeply rooted commitment towards ontological substantialism, which presumes "that entities precede interaction, or that entities are already entities before they enter into social relations with other entities".⁶⁹⁵ This already quite one-dimensional view is narrowed down further by the broad acceptance of a statist ontology. The complex dynamics of global politics are often reduced to one particular element: international relations - which derives from the latin phrase *inter nationes* and translates literarily into relations *between nations*.

Reducing global affairs to inter-state politics gives rise to a flat, state-centric ontology and perpetuates the image of a universal Westphalian republic with sovereignty as its governing principle. Actors different from states are not completely ignored, but their importance is often diminished, due to the assumption that a structure's operating logic (i.e. the one of the international) is defined by its major actors, not by all the actors in it.⁶⁹⁶ The study demonstrated the innovativeness of anarchist narratives in that regard, since they draw attention away from an allegedly absolute substance, and direct it towards ontological intangibility. Patterns such as emergent properties, non-reductionist processes, nested units, network structures, *autopoiesis* (self-making and self-reproducing), and random shifts between linearity and non-linearity (ch. VI) become suddenly visible.⁶⁹⁷ Rather than emphasizing certainty and stability, anarchism in IR highlights ontological anarchy and substantial uncertainty as the major wagers of global politics.

⁶⁹⁵ Jackson & Nexon, "Relations before States", 293.

⁶⁹⁶ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 93.

⁶⁹⁷ Cudworth & Hobden, "Anarchy and Anarchism", 403.

The very notion that all politics is politics among natural groups leads towards a dynamic ontology of the global: the global is populated and constituted by natural groups and porous sovereignties, and not exclusively by the state-form (coercive sovereigns). In that regard Prichard notes: “there is no distinction between ‘international’ and ‘domestic’ politics. States dominate and conquer populations and the relations between states are of the same kind as the relations between any other groups, only that the former are better armed”.⁶⁹⁸ This conceptual opening breaks - in the vein of Laski’s pluralism - with monistic conceptions of the state.⁶⁹⁹ And it progresses even further by means of preventing the conceptual hegemony of the state to spill over into the realm of global politics: the international is not a universal Westphalian republic, but an association of associations, of whom the state is only one among many. The concept of ontologically productive natural groups also differs radically from any liberal notion of international politics, where subject positions are often portrayed as always already constituted units. *Porous sovereignties* are agents in the making, and thus inherently precarious (c.f. antinomy, ch. VII). They do not exist under, but rather by virtue of anarchy. Anarchy is then not a challenge to be mastered, but the precondition for political life as such: the international is an anarchic frontier of permanent socio-political reproduction, kept in motion by the restless movement of constitutive powers, and built around an assemblage of *porous sovereignties*.

2.3 Beyond Westphalia: sovereignty and constituent power

The study also highlighted the structural relationship between notions of power and diverging types of sovereignty. It argued that prevalent accounts of Westphalian inter-state sovereignty are heavily influenced by a reading of power as a function of coercion and violence.⁷⁰⁰ The reasons for this fixation on force

⁶⁹⁸ Prichard, *Justice, Order and Anarchy*, 143.

⁶⁹⁹ Harold J. Laski, “The Pluralistic State”, in *The Pluralist Theory of the State*, ed. Paul Q. Hirst (Routledge: London, 1993), 190.

⁷⁰⁰ Pfenninger, “Reclaiming Sovereignty”.

and compulsion have been addressed in great detail in chapter II, and also during a close engagement with Waltz' take on anarchy in chapter I. For Waltz Westphalian polities count as purpose-built arrangements, dedicated to regulate the circulation of violence within and across domestic and international political spaces. Sovereignty, the institution deployed to authoritatively govern certain political spaces through a rationalization of violence, must then be necessarily coercive. A non-coercive, i.e. a productive account of sovereignty is neither required to exist, nor intended to flourish within the logics of inter-state politics. Coercive sovereignty leads into a constraining account of anarchy. Anarchy, the void between Westphalian war-machines breeds struggle and anguish, not by design, but due to its structural intertwinement with violence and coercive sovereignty.

Under the auspices of coercive sovereignty anarchy is perceived as a dead end, a problematic state of being, and emergent from the context of a nexus between power and sovereignty. Constituent power - i.e. Proudhonian *social force* - displaces this unidirectional logic of Westphalian politics. It offers instead a re-conceptualization of sovereignty alongside constituent lines, and provides for a cyclical account of anarchy (ch. VII). The power-sovereignty-anarchy nexus remains intact, yet its connotation changes. Other than the restrictive and punitive power that backs Westphalian sovereignty, constituent power highlights the founding and positing forces immanent to politics.⁷⁰¹ It circumnavigates the monopolizing gravity of the state and can be found in multiple locations. The rhizomatic appearance of constituent power, and its capillary dispersion throughout various global political spaces, is again perfectly captured by the figure of the *natural group*, where constituent power translates into productive, i.e. democratic and republican, accounts of sovereignty: "Machiavelli's people in arms (...) animated by the power not only to rebel against and overthrow the current order but also to create from below new democratic forms of social organization".⁷⁰² The anarchy growing from a productive account of sovereignty

⁷⁰¹ Kalyvas, "Popular Sovereignty, Democracy, and the Constituent Power", 225.

⁷⁰² Hardt, "Three Keys to Understanding Constituent Power", vii-viii.

is still underpinned by antinomy, competition, struggle, and strives over hegemony. Yet it allows for a much broader array of interests. While statist polities engage by default in a fierce security competition, *natural groups* are not exclusively driven by a survivalist rationale. Against this backdrop anarchy is not the death of politics but its *alpha* as well as its *omega*. Global politics among natural groups is possible because – not despite – the high degree of ontological anarchy which enables their existence in the first place.

Proudhon's relational ontology (ch. VI) has proven to be particularly helpful in that regard, and furthered an understanding about the constitution of political spaces through an assemblage of porous sovereignties.⁷⁰³ All politics, he proclaims in the *Little Political Catechism*, is, regardless of whether the theater is domestic or international, politics among natural groups. In its most basic terms a natural group can be any human association with a certain sense of solidarity.⁷⁰⁴ These proto-polities are sustained through processes of agglomeration and commutation, and come into existence via the mobilization of either material or ideational collective forces.⁷⁰⁵ Volatility and dynamic change is then the ontological reality of international politics, since natural groups exist in a permanent stage of becoming: families, cities, communities grow; fractions split off and develop elsewhere. Material and ideational consensuses break down and reconfigure themselves.⁷⁰⁶

2.4 The politics of space: geopolitics and anarchism

Displacing substantialist claims in favor of anarchic ontologies opens room for additional conceptual maneuver through an engagement with the topographies of the global. Geopolitical developments, it was argued, are more and more characterized by the emergence of multi-nodal and multilayered structures: “international politics works as an increasingly complex institutional

⁷⁰³ Proudhon, “Little Political Catechism”, 654.

⁷⁰⁴ Prichard, “Anarchy, Anarchism and International Relations”, 106.

⁷⁰⁵ Proudhon, “Little Political Catechism”, 654 ff.

⁷⁰⁶ Prichard, *Justice, Order and Anarchy*, 142.

and behavioural superstructure crisscrossing with both domestic politics, domestic and transnational society, and sub-units of states”.⁷⁰⁷ These multi-dimensional political processes are not limited to patterns of strict horizontal or vertical linearity, and they cannot be monopolized by actors of a certain kind or location (i.e. by states acting within the international system). This observation is shared by the *natural groups*-approach, which differs strongly from system-centric theories. From a natural groups-perspective the global is constituted by an assemblage of proto-polities which project *social force*. Within these configurations certain groups are capable of wielding constituent power, which allows them to inflict long-lasting, structural change upon the makeup of the global. The elevated position held by those polities allows them to act in a genuinely sovereign way, while lacking the discrete distinctiveness of the state: they are hence described as *porous sovereignties* (ch. VII). In order to increase IR’s understanding of how the global as a political space is constituted, it is necessary to understand how material and ideational resources are wielded by porous sovereignties, and how they relate towards each other. Their location, be it local, national, international, or global, as well as their socio-political function is only of secondary concern in that regard. What matters is their structural impact on the configuration of global and transnational political realms.

A heightened awareness of anarchic ontologies, coupled with an increased susceptibility towards the topographies of the global, directs IR’s attention towards the multiplicity of non-territorial, non-discrete geopolitical spaces. Structural theories expose a strong and narrow fixation on Westphalian patterns of spatiality, and characterizes it “as a series of blocks defined by state territorial boundaries”.⁷⁰⁸ A critical approach would argue to take structural spaces into account as well if one wants to understand properly how global political outcomes are produced. An account on structural spatiality highlights the fact that the essence of global political space is first and foremost characterized by its constituting set of power relations, and not by its territoriality. From this

⁷⁰⁷ Cerny, “Reframing the International”, 15.

⁷⁰⁸ Agnew, “The Territorial Trap”, 55.

perspective the spatial makeup of ‘the global’ does not appear as a patchwork made up exclusively of discrete territorial realms, but presents itself instead as a complex interplay of structural spaces. Only a few of them can actually claim to own territory, while the vast majority fails to comply with this criterion. This fact diminishes only their ability to count as *statist sovereign*, but leaves their capacity to perform functions of a *porous sovereignty* completely intact.

2.5 Geopolitical spaces and the ethics of porous sovereignty

Last but not least it was suggested to acknowledge the normative potential inherent to *porous sovereignties* (ch. VIII). This potential is realized through an ethical interrogation of the spatializing practices inherent to contemporary interstate politics. Political spaces count as institutions whose existence is heavily dependent on the existence of intertwining power relations. Such spaces can not be reduced to simple regulative mechanisms, but also reflect a specific set of ethics: ways of acting, being, and relating towards each other (ch. VIII). Westphalian spaces, it was argued, convey an *ethos of survival*: they are structurally dependent on ontological binaries, i.e. hierarchy/anarchy, inside/outside, or self/enemy, and enforce narratives of self-help and survivalism which legitimize statist practices.⁷⁰⁹

Two particular problems were identified in this regard: *firstly*, the supposed necessity upon which these binaries rest derives from an image of the ‘other’ as a well-spring of violence, destined to be brought under control. It has been demonstrated that such depictions are merely based on speculations grounded in political theory, while lacking any support through empirical evidence. The narrative’s origins can be traced back to the Hobbesian state of nature, which still exalts a firm conceptual grip on IR, and impacts heavily on how the discipline justifies the existence of the state-form (ch. VIII).⁷¹⁰ This narrative leads, *secondly*, to a monopolization of politics and ethics through the state, and crowns it as the principle polity, required to coordinate the circulation of violence in and across

⁷⁰⁹ Odysseos, “Dangerous ontologies”, 404 f.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., 406 ff.

territorially defined political realms. Statist spaces position themselves at the center of inter-human affairs: all political conduct must either be initiated or supervised by them, while every social relation is forged against the backdrop of territorially defined spaces. Global politics is reduced to international relations, and the provision of certain political goods (i.e. democracy) is supposedly possibly only within states, not across them.

Employing *porous sovereignties* as an ethico-political principle creates room for agency in world politics, and reaches beyond the conceptual hegemony of the state. The nature of states as purpose-built war-machines, and the climate of enmity they create, has been problematized throughout the study. *Porous sovereignties* harbor the potential to break with the vicious circle of inter-state anarchy and self-help which rationalizes the existence of Westphalian polities. The primary interest of *porous sovereignties* can not be reduced to bare-bones survivalism. Their interests are instead multifaceted, and dependent on their respective socio-political functions, as well as their location within a global political setting: workshops, unions, industries, NGOs, etc. do not usually succumb to the Hobbesian *ethos of survival*. In an antinomic fashion they are instead driven by an anarchist *ethos of mutualism*. Within the setting of what was termed the *omniverse* the outbreak of violence is certainly not off limits. Yet its likelihood is dramatically decreased, since sets of actors enter the scene whose *differentia specifica* is to marshal constituent power, while engaging in efforts to collaboratively alter the global's political configuration via the deployment of *porous sovereignty*.

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