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Political Violence: A Psychoanalytic (Ethical) Perspective
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Given the violent civil turmoil of 17th century England and the belief that the state of nature was a war of all against all, Thomas Hobbes argued that a society needed a leviathan to enforce social-political cooperation as citizens pursued their own interests (Ryan, 2012, pp. 411-435). The leviathan is sovereign and, as such, has legitimate authority to threaten or exercise political violence for the sake of political-social stability. Centuries later, Giorgi Agamben (1998), building on the work of Walter Benjamin, argues that the roots and exercise of sovereignty—and its attending law-making and law-preserving actions—are founded in political violence. Perhaps Freud would have agreed with Hobbes and Agamben. He used the Oedipal myth to frame psychosocial development, indicating the seemingly existential developmental reality of ruling through violence—King Laius assures his rule through violence toward his son only to later lose sovereignty by being killed by his son. Freud (1950) also posited that the origin of civilization is based on the killing of the tribal leader-father by the sons who then took over, ruling the people. That political violence is rife in human history does not necessarily mean it is inevitable or essential for political belonging and order, or identical to aggression. Nor does its seeming ubiquity mean it is justifiable.

Here I explore the notion of political violence from a psychoanalytic-phenomenological perspective, arguing that political violence is fundamentally unethical, though, at times, it is an understandable means of seeking justice or emancipation. To make this case, the first step is to explicate what is meant by the notion "political" and depict its attributes, which sets the framework for depicting the developmental origins and attributes of political selves/agencies. From here, I explain what is meant by political violence—its functions and aims—and identify its consequences vis-à-vis political psyches. In this discussion, it will become clear that political violence, at its core, entails a contradiction in that it denies political agency and political belonging to those who are the objects of violence. While the ends of political violence may be, at times, desirable (e.g., emancipation), it is fundamentally unethical precisely because it does not establish and maintain the space of speaking and acting together in relation to those who are the objects of violence.

Before diving in, it is necessary to proffer a few clarifying comments. My interest in this topic emerges against the dire realities of climate change. As Coral Davenport (2014) notes, CIA and Pentagon reports predict increasing political violence between and within states as resources dwindle and human migrations increase. Indeed, we are already beginning to see impacts of global warming in relation to failed or failing states (Parenti, 2011; Sassen, 2014). Second and relatedly, it is my contention that those in the psychological sciences/arts and their professional associations are obliged to reconsider their public-political role given the realities of climate change and the ensuing rise in

political violence. This includes engaging in political discourses regarding the ethics of political violence to attain particular ends, as well as to seek ways to mitigate violence, which is not the focus of this paper. Third, there is a great deal of literature on political violence and much of the discourse centers on the moral reasons for nations going to war (*jus ad bellum*), rules governing the conduct of war (*jus in bello*), and expectations regarding actions toward the defeated (*jus post bellum*). This discourse, in my view, essentializes political violence, while simultaneously constructing moral principles for limiting its frequency and effects. The approach in this paper parallels that of feminist scholars Elizabeth Frazer and Kimberly Hutchings (2020). They consider political violence from a phenomenological perspective, focusing on the moment of political violence and not its ends or its "just" limits. By focusing on the relational moment of political violence, they conclude that it is fundamentally unethical.

My approach is similar, though I rely on psychoanalytic renderings of the political psyche and the impact of political violence on these psyches. Fourth, Freud (1930) warned about using concepts torn "from the sphere in which they have originated and been evolved" and employing them in non-clinical settings, possibly misusing concepts and distorting the objects of investigation. Of course, this did not deter Freud and others from using psychoanalytic concepts to understand cultural and religious realities (p.144; see also Coles 1975; Meissner 1992). While Freud's caution is worthy of consideration, it is important to recognize that the consulting room and social-political field, while distinct, intersect in myriad ways when it comes to political realities, as Franz Fanon (2008/1952) knew well.

The Polis and Political Psyches

Philosopher Hannah Arendt (1958), relying on her interpretations of Plato and Aristotle, views the polis as a space wherein people *speak and act together* (e.g., space of appearance) toward living a life in common, which includes interpersonal contestations in reaching a shared vision of the good life.[1] She argues further that "the polis properly speaking is not a city-state in its physical location, it is an organization of the people as it arises out of speaking and acting together" (p.198). Following though amending Aristotle's view, Arendt (2005) believes the polis is necessary for human beings to "attain their full humanity, not only because they are (as in the privacy of the household) but also because they appear" (p.21). In other words, "Politics arises in what lies between [human beings] and is established as relationships" (p.95). Her views are echoed in

[1] It is important to mention that Arendt believed Socrates epitomized the public role of the philosopher, while Plato, shocked at the political killing of his teacher, retreated from actively engaging in the political domain. Plato set the West, she argues, on a trajectory of philosophers not actively being involved in the political sphere. [Marx would be an exception.] It is not only philosophers who have shied away from engaging in public-political sphere. Psychoanalysts tend to avoid delving into the public-political realm, instead focusing on the consulting room. A notable exception was Franz Fanon, who treated patients suffering from the effects of the brutality of French colonial forces, while also being engaged in public-political resistance (LaMothe, 2017). On a different note of clarification, Arendt differentiates between labor (our work to survive, e.g., our job), culture (the work of creating meaning, e.g., the arts, ritual), and action (speaking and acting together in the public political realm).

Agamben's (2011) work, wherein he argues that politics is humankind's "most proper dimension," (p.xiii), which is, for both Arendt (King, 2015, pp.71-73) and Agamben, a dimension characterized by both plurality and the inclusion of nature.[2]

There remains a question as to what comprises this most proper dimension of speaking and acting together. In other words, if the polis' space of speaking and acting together is foundational for the appearance of unique selves and human flourishing, what factor(s) or attribute(s) founds speaking and acting together? Contemporary political philosophers John Macmurray (1991), Axel Honneth (1995), and Nancy Fraser (2003) provide an answer, noting that a viable and flourishing polis is founded on interpersonal recognition, which means that individuals are constructed as persons—unique, valued, inviolable, responsive subjects—and that, as a result, they appear in their singularity or suchness in the spaces of speaking and acting together.

A key point here is that an individual's experience of personhood or singularity is realized "in and through the other" (Macmurray, 1991, p.158). Put differently, "personal relationships override all the distinctions which differentiate people…. [This] does not mean that there are not immense differences between one person and another; it means that these differences have no bearing upon the possibility of personal relationships and have nothing to do with the structure or constitution of the personal life" (p.60). By contrast, "whenever one person treats another as an instrument for his use, or as an object for his enjoyment, he denies in practice the other's essential nature as a person" (Macmurray, 1993, pp.71-72). To "appear" in the polis, then, means there must be recognition and treatment of human beings as persons who possess the agency to participate in the polis' spaces of speaking and acting together.

It is important to stress that to experience oneself as a person (singularity) is a social and political achievement, and one that logically implies flourishing in the midst of plurality (King, 2015, pp.156-157). Included in interpersonal recognition is civic trust and fidelity. For people to speak and act together, for people to risk appearing, for people to cooperate in living a life in common and in constructing a shared vision, there must be sufficient civic trust and fidelity (Løgstrup, 1997). Failed states or indecent societies (Margalit, 1996) manifest relations characterized by objectification or depersonalization toward marginalized groups and individuals, undermining spaces of speaking and acting together and concomitantly undermining civic trust and fidelity. The prevalence of racism and classism in the United States, for instance, illustrates how political spaces of appearances are undermined as a result of depersonalization of marginalized persons who are constructed as untrustworthy and who are not owed personal recognition and

[2] Agamben (2004) contends that Western philosophy has largely excluded nature from political theorizing and this has had a detrimental effect on other-than-human beings and the environment. From a psychoanalytic perspective, there has also been a tendency to exclude nature from consideration of psychosocial development. That said, there have been notable exceptions such as Harold Searles (1960), who sought to include other-than-human beings in his consideration of psychological development (see also Kassouf, 2017). I add that it is not possible to address in this article the relation between political violence and nature, though it is clearly a feature evident in the global exploitation of other-than-human species and the degradation of the environment.

resources. Failures in interpersonal recognition and diminishment of civic trust and fidelity accompany, as both Fraser and Honneth (2003) note, maldistribution of resources in a society.

Put differently, both misrecognition and maldistribution of resources occur in concert with exclusion or marginalization from the spaces of speaking and acting together. In considering any polis, then, we can examine the spaces of speaking and acting together, determining who participates and who does not. That is, who are recognized and treated as persons and who are not? Who are deemed trustworthy? To whom do we owe social and political fidelity? Who has political agency? And what are our obligations to other-than-human beings and the earth, especially when we consider that Western political philosophies have largely excluded nature from the polis (Agamben, 2004)?

Arendt, Agamben, Margalit, Honneth, and Fraser recognize that the polis' space of speaking and acting together includes numerous failures and conflicts. Human beings are susceptible to vices, forms of parochialism, biases, mistakes, passions and inordinate desires that overcome reason, simplistic binary thinking, and indifference—hence politics is agonistic and tragic. Aristotle's patriarchal polis, for example, privileged men as citizens and undermined personal recognition vis-à-vis women, "barbarians," and slaves, thus excluding them from participating in political spaces of speaking and acting together. They were, in other words, not trusted to participate in political spaces of speaking and acting together. To fast forward to the 21st century, as mentioned above, racism and classism in the United States and other nations manifest the presence of social, political, and economic institutions and practices that exclude or marginalize persons of color, LGBTQI persons, and poor persons from public-political spaces of speaking and acting together, which is accompanied by the maldistribution of resources. Because of the conflictual or agonistic and tragic elements of the polis, Arendt (2005) argues that a polis must have institutions that facilitate practices of forgiveness, which invites the possibility of repairing the social-political fabric. The possibilities of repair and change include restoration of interpersonal recognition and the space of appearances, a relatively equitable distribution of resources, and deepening the civic trust and fidelity that are necessary for cooperation. In short, there must be possibilities for repair if the polis is one of promise and hope.[3]

Before elaborating on what this all means with regard to political psyches, it is important to state that interpersonal recognition, civic trust, civic fidelity, and reparative processes are supported by the polis' narratives, practices, and institutions or, more broadly, apparatuses. Agamben (2009) uses the term "apparatus" to refer to "a set of

[3] There are contemporary examples of Arendt's claim. Desmond Tutu (1999), for instance, argues for the necessity of forgiveness and reconciliation if the South African society is to move toward flourishing (see also Volf, 2006). There are numerous countries that have established Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, which further illustrates Hannah Arendt's claim. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wikiVolf,%20M.%20(1996).%20Exclusion%20and%20embrace.%20Nashville:%20Abingdon%20Press./List_of_truth_and_reconciliation_commissions accessed 9 August 2021.

practices, bodies of knowledge, measures and institutions that aim to manage, govern, control, and orient—in a way that purports to be useful—the behaviors, gestures, and thoughts of human beings" (p.13). Referencing Foucault, Agamben writes that "in a disciplinary society, apparatuses aim to create—through a series of practices, discourses, and bodies of knowledge—docile, yet free, bodies that assume their identity and their 'freedom' as subjects" (p.19). We can add to this and indicate that a viable and flourishing polis possesses apparatuses that facilitate, support, and maintain interpersonal recognition, civic trust, and reparative processes that are necessary for viable spaces of speaking and acting together.

As political philosophers, Arendt, Agamben, Honneth and Fraser are not focused on the developmental aspects vis-à-vis persons engaged in the polis. Here I believe psychoanalytic developmental perspectives can help to depict the emergence of political selves. It important to make clear that analysts like Andrew Samuels (1993, 2001, 2004), Cushman (1995), and Layton, Hollander, and Gutwell (2006), and others have explored and depicted aspects of political selves or psyches, their relation to political-economic institutions and ideologies, and their presence in the consulting room (also Fanon, 2008/1952). While these are valuable contributions, the focus here is to rely on the concepts above and frame these in terms of developmental perspectives so that I can demonstrate the close connection between developmental perspectives and political realities associated with political selves. This is necessary for advancing the argument that political violence is unethical.

When focusing on infant-parent interaction, it can be easy to overlook how political and economic realities are present. Certainly, Donald Winnicott (1971) recognized that for parents to hold and handle their children, they need to be held and handled by the larger society. While Winnicott was not directly referring to the political realm, it can be inferred. Of course, it would be a mistake to suggest that a political self is present in early life, even as infants are birthed into a particular polis. This said, the early interactions between parents and children are, in my view, pre-political spaces of speaking and acting together. By pre-political, I mean three things. First, this space is shaped by larger political realities, though often, but not always, outside of parents' awareness. Second, pre-political also means that infants lack political agency and a political self, even as they engage in "speaking" and acting together with parents. Third, there are parallels between political spaces of speaking and acting together and parents and children speaking and acting together. That is, while political spaces of speaking and acting together are distinct from child-parent interactions, they are not radically so. To understand the emergence of political selves, I begin with the early developmental processes of good-enough parents attuning to their infants.

Macmurray makes an interesting claim about infants. The infant, he writes, "is, in fact, 'adapted', so to speak paradoxically, to being unadapted, 'adapted to complete dependence…. He can only live through other people" (Macmurray, 1961, pp.48, 51). In their unadapted, dependent state, infants possess an impulse or motivation to communicate—"the impulse to communicate is [their] sole adaptation to the world" (p.60). The impulse to communicate is an infant's attempt to survive and thrive, which

naturally occurs in relation to good-enough parents who are able and willing to attune to their children's assertions (Beebe & Lachmann, 1992; Stern, 1985; Sroufe, 1995; Winnicott, 1971). These attunements of good-enough parenting are founded on personal recognition, which includes reparative actions associated with misattunements (Safron, & Muran, 1996, 2000; Tronick & Cohn, 1989). This communicative dynamic refers to a pre-political space of speaking and acting together.

Naturally, infants' communications are presymbolic, which raises questions regarding infants' organization of experience and a corresponding sense of self. Decades ago, infant-parent researchers recognized that infants organize experience *in utero*, demonstrating preferences within hours of birth (DeCasper & Fifer, 1980; DeCasper & Spence, 1986). Add to this Winnicott's (1975) contention that, contra Freud, an infant's nascent ego and agency emerge in the womb. Winnicott wrote, "(A)ctual birth can easily be felt by the infant, in the normal case, to be a successful outcome of personal effort owing to the more or less accurate timing" (p.186). For Winnicott, infants' efforts in birth processes suggest agency, a nascent ego, and a pre-representational belief that they participate in the birth. So, if a nascent, pre-representational agency exists in the birthing process and/or in the moments, then we can infer some level of embodied-pre-representational organization of experience.

This said, Winnicott (1965) also indicated that the nascent ego is initially in an unintegrated state, yet this unintegrated state does not imply an absence of organization. Since Winnicott was fond of paradox, we could say the unintegrated state accompanies the infant's organizing experience pre-representationally. There is much outside an infant's ability to organize experience. This is reminiscent of William James' (1918) comment that to the baby the world is "one great blooming buzzing confusion" (p.488), but in the midst of the confusion or non-integration there is a rudimentary agentic capacity to organize experience pre-representationally (Winnicott, 1945, p.139). Once born, an infant's developing capacity to organize experience is aided by parents' personal attunements. An infant's burgeoning agency, in other words, takes place within the matrices of speaking (proto-conversations: see Bonovitz & Harlem, 2018; Trevarthen, 1993; Levin & Trevarthen, 2000) and acting with good-enough attuning parents, which give rise to embodied, pre-representational experiences of self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-respect.[4]

Put differently, for dependent and vulnerable infants to "appear" (risk assertions) in this space, they must possess some nascent confidence linked to embodied-pre-representation experiences of trust, which emerge in concert with good-enough parents' reliable attunements and repair (fidelity). I stress here that nascent, pre-representational embodied self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-respect are relational (Fast, 1998), which suggests that a sense of dependency and vulnerability are as well. Sufficient experiences of reliable attunements, then, insure not only relational trust, but also that dependency and vulnerability, while attending some anxiety, are tolerable. Acceptance of dependency

[4] Axel Honneth (1995) said that political agency comprises a sense of self-esteem, self-respect, and self-confidence that is derived from good-enough social-political apparatuses. I am simply adapting this view to an earlier stage of development that is pre-political.

and vulnerability is necessary for infants to be able to be open enough to receive parental care *and* to risk appearing in this pre-political space. By contrast, parental failures (collapse of the space of speaking and acting together) lead to distrust, shame, uncertainty and high anxiety associated with vulnerability and dependency, which, in turn, undermines the openness necessary to engage in these proto conversations.
Let's leave this presymbolic period of development and leap to the time children develop capacities for symbolization and narrative.

The space of speaking and acting together is more complicated as children gain an ever-increasing ability for language, self-regulation, mentalization (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target, 2002), and a growing capacity to recognize their parents as persons. Good-enough parenting continues to facilitate children's 1) handling of dependency and vulnerability, 2) assertions to appear (relational trust), 3) agency, and 4) concomitant symbolic/narrative constructions and organizations of self-esteem, self-respect, and self-confidence. Children gain greater interdependence, yet vulnerability and dependency remain part of the relational matrix.

Before discussing children's transition to engaging others in the public-political sphere and the emergence of the political self, it is important to make clear that pre-political spaces are impacted by political realities. This is most evident in groups and families that experience political oppression and marginalization. A brief illustration will help. Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015) writes of his experiences growing up in an impoverished section of New Jersey. In his memoir to his teenaged son, Coates repeatedly writes about the fears of African Americans and of his own terror of disembodiment as a child and as an adult, which was the direct result of the oppressive and marginalizing apparatuses of racism (p.104). This fear was also exhibited in his father's love for him long before Coates was aware of racism, which echoes James Baldwin's (1984) comment that "Long before the Negro child perceives this difference [white superiority], and even longer before he understands it, he has begun to react to it, he has begun to be controlled by it" (p.26). Coates (2015) writes, "My father was so very afraid. I felt it in the sting of his black leather belt, which he applied with more anxiety than anger" (p.15).

His father's physical discipline took place against the background of pervasive violence—rooted in the sociopolitical machinery of racism—and was aimed at protecting his son. "Everyone," Coates writes, "has lost a child, somehow to the streets, to jail, to drugs, to guns" (p.16). Recalling his dad's voice, "Either I can beat him, or the police," Coates struggles with whether or not that saved him. "All I know," he writes, "is the violence rose from the fear like smoke from a fire, and I cannot say whether that violence, even administered in fear and love, sounded the alarm or choked us at the exit" (pp.16-17). As Coates tells us, "It was a loving house even as it was besieged by its country, but it *was* hard" (p.126). All of this is to say that the pre-political space of parents and children speaking and acting together is shaped by larger political forces and, in this case, 1) undermines trust, agency, and embodied, representational and pre-representational senses of self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-respect, and 2) heightens anxiety related to dependency and vulnerability.

This brief discussion provides the stepping-stone to depict the transition to a political self. If all goes well enough, children discover public-political representations that support their self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-respect, which are foundational for developing political self/agency vis-à-vis public-political spaces of speaking and acting together. The larger political milieu, in other words, includes apparatuses that undergird the public-political personal recognition, civic trust, and civic fidelity necessary for individuals to risk (vulnerability) appearing in their singularities in these public-political spaces. For many children, the development of their political selves occurs unnoticed, but, as seen in the example above, children from oppressed and marginalized groups encounter difficult and painful obstacles. These children encounter a public-political field of apparatuses and disciplinary regimes that produce and enforce beliefs in and experiences of inferiority (public-political humiliation and denial of singularity), heightening vulnerability, and undermining self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-respect.

Like Coates, many children grow anxious and fearful with regard to appearing in a political milieu that produces distrust and betrayal toward African Americans. Put differently, instead of a political space of appearances that makes dependency and vulnerability relatively safe to risk political agency, political-economic racism (and classism) contributes to a fear of vulnerability in exercising political agency in public-political spaces of speaking and acting together. Indeed, as Orlando Patterson (1982), Cedric Robinson (2016), and Carol Anderson (2016) have noted, whenever African Americans have successfully asserted themselves in the larger political spaces of appearance, white backlash occurs. Political forms of violence are terroristic tactics designed to undermine African Americans' political selves/agencies, marginalizing or removing them from the society's space of appearances.

Political Violence

This discussion regarding political self/agency provides the foundation for addressing political violence as unethical. Before doing so, we need to have some idea of what is meant by political violence, which will include identifying types of political violence. Because of space constraints, I will restrict myself to political violence within a state, though I consider political violence between states to also be unethical despite the mountains of literature on just war theory. From here I will argue, using the framework above, that political violence is unethical because it forecloses the space of speaking and acting together, obliterates civic trust and fidelity, denies victims' political selves/agencies, and undermines or eliminates political belonging—even as it might secure for perpetrators of violence a political sense of belonging and agency.

Elizabeth Frazer and Kimberly Hutchings (2020) note that "The concept of violence and the concept of politics are vague and contested" (p.2). Recognizing this, we can begin to obtain some clarity by offering a general definition, which is followed by a brief discussion on direct and indirect forms of political violence and then types. Succinctly, political violence involves the use or the threat of force[5] by individuals and

[5] Arendt (1970) distinguishes between power and violence. Power is associated with people speaking and acting together, while force is a synonym for violence, which is characterized by its

groups to secure or safeguard political, economic, social, and/or cultural goods (e.g., identity, resources, privileges) within a polis (or between states). All perpetrators and supporters of political violence, whether they are in the dominant group or the oppressed group, justify their use of force by way of narratives, philosophies, theologies, etc. Those in the dominant group legitimize force through laws, policies, etc. (e.g., Jim Crow), while oppressed and marginalized groups justify political violence by way of grievance narratives and philosophies.

Political violence can be direct or indirect. Direct political violence involves what one would typically expect to observe in a society. Examples include use of police (and parapolice) or military (and paramilitary) forces to quell protests or insurrections, as well as terroristic practices such as lynching, public beatings, executions, bombings, imprisonment, and torture. Direct political violence is also evident in situations where citizens riot or rebel. Indirect forms of political violence are more difficult to detect and are not often seen as violence. Environmental racism and classism are examples of systemic indirect political violence that lead to illnesses and shortened lifespans of marginalized citizens (e.g., Blackburn & Epel, 2018).

Decades of Jim Crow laws and new Jim and Jane Crow laws and policies represent indirect (and direct) political violence that suppresses African Americans voting, restricts and undermines education, denies access to resources (medical, food deserts, etc.), and impedes gaining financial wealth (Alexander, 2010). Judith Butler's (2020) discussion of political violence furthers this view. She writes that political "violence operates as an intensification of social inequality" (p.142), which is evident in the intersecting apparatuses of racism. Relatedly, there is also the indirect political violence of neoliberal capitalism with its maldistribution of resources such that the rich garner vast amounts of wealth at the expense of the so-called lower classes, undermining their well-being (e.g., Klein, 2007; Piketty, 2014, 2020; Valencia, 2018). Johanna Oksala (2012), using the work of Foucault, argues that political violence "is inherent to the rationality of neoliberal governing" and, worse, "it effectively depoliticizes violence by turning it into an essentially economic rather than a political or moral issue" (p.136).

In other words, indirect political violence is often mystified by state and non-state actors. There is also indirect political violence that attends ostensible nationalistic and patriotic reasons for defense of the nation. For instance, during the Cold War, the U.S. and U.S.S.R. spent hundreds of billions of dollars on nuclear arsenals and military equipment and training. The rationale was the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) as a way to deter outright war. Indirect political violence was (and is) evident in the vast amounts of money and resources that were rendered unavailable to address the needs of poor persons (or the environment), whether within the U.S., the Soviet Union, or so-called third world countries—countries that were often used for proxy wars between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The conscious or public intent was not necessarily political violence toward citizens, but the effect was a kind of political violence of deprivation vis-à-vis poorer citizens (and other marginalized persons). Some readers may

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instrumental nature. She writes, "Power is indeed the essence of all government, but violence is not. Violence is by nature instrumental" (p.51).

wonder if this is political violence, but when a state, like the U.S., spends trillions of dollars on "defense," it is also depriving people of needed resources to flourish. Deprivation occurs as a result of force. As Martin Luther King Jr. asserted, "War is the enemy of the poor." I would add, preparation for war is the enemy of the poor, causing harm by failing to provide the resources necessary for survival and flourishing.

Another insidious form of indirect political violence involves the deliberate exclusion of marginalized persons from being represented in the history of the nation or, if represented, marginalized persons are represented in humiliating ways (Saïd, 1979, 1994). All of this cannot be accomplished without the aid of political, economic, and cultural apparatuses. As Miguel De La Torre (2017) writes, "To be written out of the story becomes a terrorist act, in which the memory of the marginalized is replaced by the fictitious story of their oppressors, robbing them of identity, of centeredness, of authentic being. Such a terrorist act is more insidious than physical harm, for it devastates the soul, the spirit, the mind, the very essence of a people" (p.32). De La Torre's describes a form of indirect violence that excludes people from the space of speaking and acting together in the past, which impacts the present. These Others are not seen as having or deserving political agency. Othered individuals are denied civic trust and fidelity, which means that they are not recognized in terms of their singularities.

In this general overview of direct and indirect political violence, we can discern basic types of violence, as well as aims. For instance, Johan Galtung (1975) identified and described structural violence in relation to the political. Structural or systemic violence is evident in the social, political, and economic institutions (apparatuses or disciplinary regimes) that, along with socially held narratives and policies, legitimate and justify the practices of or threats of force toward particular groups (Ruggiero, 2020). For instance, the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement is a response to the structural violence directed at African Americans by police (Goldberg, 2009; Soss, Fording & Schram, 2011: Wacquant, 2009), which is supported by local, state, and national laws that serve to shield police officers from responsibility for the consequences of their violent (and intimidation, which is a form of indirect violence) actions. To add to this, environmental racism depends on structural violence, forcing impoverished communities of color to live in conditions that violate their health. There is structural violence in neoliberal capitalism, which is supported and promulgated by state and non-state apparatuses that legitimate theft of workers' pay and benefits, increasing their precarity. Structural violence is also evident in social and political institutions that deny or restrict people from participating in the polis' space of appearances. Voter suppression laws and policies are examples.

These direct and indirect forms of structural violence are legitimated and justified by socially held narratives, institutions like the media, and discourses of political and economic elites. For instance, the rise of neoliberal capitalism in the West was initially promulgated by intellectuals and their think tanks, before making its way into the minds and hearts of governmental elites (Jones, 2012). Foucault's (1972) work on the intersection of knowledge and power and its connection to the workings of neoliberalism has been helpful in highlighting how structural violence quietly deforms the political

subjectivities of individuals. Jennifer Silva's (2013) work on the deleterious effects of neoliberal ideology and its accompanying discourses on the psyches of so-called lower-class individuals is a more recent illustration of socially held and legitimated narratives, policies, etc., that undermine the well-being of residents.

Structural violence is attended and supported by symbolic or epistemic violence. Epistemic forms of violence "damage people through a process of denigration and exclusion" (Frazer & Hutchings, 2020, p.3). According to Hannah Arendt, epistemic violence entails the systemic misrecognition or nonrecognition of some residents such that they are marginalized from participating in the space of appearances—speaking and acting together. This has long been true with regard to women in the West, whose equality has been denied, through coercion, threats of violence, and violence. Politically constructed as having less capability (e.g., reason, deliberation) and, therefore, not trustworthy, women were (and in some places continue to be) restricted from access to and engagement in public, political, and economic spaces. To suggest that this is not political violence is incorrect for two reasons. First, to subordinate or subjugate persons (e.g., women, people of color), while also denying them access to resources to actualize their potential, is accomplished by forms of direct and indirect political violence.

Epistemic violence depends on structural violence and vice-versa. Second, a cursory glance at the 70-plus years of women agitating for the right to vote in the U.S. (1848-1920) reveals the political violence and the threat of violence toward women activists. Epistemic violence is also evident in the long sordid history of racism in the U.S., wherein African Americans and other people of color (Latinx, Chinese, etc.) have been and are discriminated against. Both structural and symbolic or epistemic violence depend on dominant narratives that involve negatively constructing Others as inferior (lacking singularity), which both motivates and "justifies" political violence as a means of rejecting the political agency of Others. As mentioned above, this can take the form of indirect violence wherein targeted groups are denied access to political spaces, as well as resources to care for themselves, their families, and communities (Trepagnier, 2010).

The aims of political violence are varied. States pursue political violence to maintain sovereignty, identity, and territory. Imperial states can also engage in forms of political violence to expand economic and political power and territory. Groups in positions of power within a state seek to maintain their power, wealth, and privileges through the use of direct and indirect structural and epistemic forms of political violence. Those who suffer under the heel of political oppression may use political violence to overturn the government—insurrections and revolutions (Arendt, 1970). Others may use political violence to change unjust institutions and practices. Persons on any point of the political spectrum may resort to political violence out of fear of losing cherished moral, theological, or philosophical traditions. There are also instances of political violence that emerge out of despair, with the aim of causing malignant destruction. Of course, many of these aims may overlap. To shift to the realities of climate change, we can safely predict that varied forms and aims of political violence will be used by those seeking change and those seeking to remain ensconced in the soporific embrace of neoliberal capitalism, nationalism, and imperialism.

Political Violence as Unjustifiable

Now I want to shift directions, arguing that political violence is a problem because it is not justifiable. Johanna Oksala (2012) comments that "Thinkers from Plato to Hobbes, Machiavelli, Sorel, Clausewitz, and Schmitt have built their understanding of the political on the recognition of the irreducibility of violence in human affairs. More recently scholars such as Chantal Mouffe and Slavoj Žižek have emphasized the ineliminability of violence from the political domain" (p.3). At best, in these views, we can only hope to limit violence or find constructive, justifiable ways to use it, because it is a part of human nature and political belonging. It may be that political violence is ineliminable, but it does not logically follow that we must find ways to justify it. While the typical method of justification involves attending to the ends of political violence, I am interested in the moment and relation of political violence, not to provide justification, but rather to indicate why political violence in and of itself is not justified.

While political violence can appear to be efficient (Oksala, 2012, p.109), "the price," Arendt (1970) remarks, "is very high; for it is not only paid by the vanquished, it is also paid by the victor" (p.53). We have a fairly good idea about the ways the vanquished pay the price, but the ways the victors pay a price may be less obvious. Decades of political violence during the Jim Crow Era, directed toward terrorizing African Americans and restricting or denying their participation in the polis' space of appearances, maintained the political, social, and economic privileges of many white people. Yet, Eduardo Porter (2020) provides evidence that the racist beliefs that undergirded political-economic policies aimed at harming African Americans also negatively impacted and impacts the education and health of poor white people.

The cost of political violence is also high because it begets more violence (Arendt, 1970, p.80), as well as social, political, and economic alienation. As Judith Butler (2020) notes, political violence "does not exhaust itself in the realization of a just end; rather, it renews itself in directions that exceed both deliberate intention and instrumental schemes" (p.20). The mimetic nature of political violence is costly because victimizers must be continually vigilant and constantly maintain disciplinary regimes that produce misrecognition, while also fueling a steady stream of hatred toward the objects of political violence. The targets of political violence, in other words, are continually constructed as inferior; they are objectified or depersonalized, which means there is a loss of mentalization vis-à-vis depersonalized Others. The perpetrators of political violence are dependent on continually producing the illusion of their "superiority" (and Other's inferiority) for their political agency, which undergirds their version of civic trust and fidelity vis-à-vis political spaces of speaking and acting together. This also means, therefore, there is a corresponding collapse or diminishment (by virtue of indirect epistemic and structural violence) of the space of speaking and acting together toward Othered "inferior" individuals and groups. These "inferior" Others are denied political agency (at worse), which means they are deprived of self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-respect in the dominant political spaces. Othered individuals are not regarded as belonging in these spaces and, therefore, are not trusted to act in these spaces—creating an eclipse of political belonging. Of course, people do speak and act together to plan and

execute political violence, but they are not speaking and acting *with* those who are misrecognized and treated as inferior—thus, "justifiably" the object of violence. In preparing for and maintaining political violence, there is a denial of the personhood or singularity and political agency of Othered individuals.

When individuals and groups are marginalized or excluded from political spaces of speaking and acting together, they are denied political agency or a political self. There is, then, in the larger social-political field, a dearth or absence of representations that would provide the self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-respect necessary for political agency in the dominant political spaces of speaking and acting together. This does not mean that marginalized or oppressed people lack opportunities for political agency or a sense of self-esteem, self-respect, and self-confidence. It is just that these are not found in the dominant social-political relations and spaces that are imbued with political violence. An illustration can help here. Malcolm X (Haley, 1964) and his family of origin experienced direct and indirect epistemic and structural forms of political violence. Of course, as a young child, Malcolm did not realize the sources of his suffering or the suffering within his family. As mentioned above, political violence infects and effects the ability of parents to care for their children, even as they try to shield their children from the virulent effects of racism by providing them, through caring attunements, with a sense of self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-respect that comes from personal recognition in the parent-child space of speaking and acting together.

In Malcolm's case, his parents tried to provide for their children, even as his father and mother were under threat of direct and indirect forms of structural and epistemic violence from white racists. Their situation grew even more precarious after Malcolm's father was murdered and his mother, because of racism and sexism, had difficulty being able to care for her children. Indeed, we see structural and epistemic political violence in the state's "care" for his family after his father's death. Recalling this time of loss, fear, and extreme vulnerability, Malcolm X said, "I truly believe that if ever a state agency destroyed a family, it destroyed ours. We wanted and tried to stay together. Our home didn't have to be destroyed. But the Welfare, the courts, and their doctor, gave us the one-two-three punch. And ours was not the only case of this kind" (p.22).

Another insidious illustration of epistemic violence occurred when Malcolm was in eighth grade. Malcolm X's teacher, Mr. Ostrowski,[6] asked Malcolm if he had considered a career. "The truth is I hadn't. I never have figured out why I told him, 'Well, yes sir, I've been thinking I'd like to be a lawyer.'" (p.38). Here we see a young boy aspiring to reach for a socially esteemed profession against the background of constant messages regarding black inferiority. His teacher replied, "Malcolm, one of life's first needs is for us to be realistic. Don't misunderstand me, now. We all here like you, you know that. But you've got to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer—that's no realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you can be. You're good with your hands—making things. Everyone admires your carpentry shop work. Why

[6] Biographer Manning Marable (2011) indicates that the teacher's name was Richard Kaminska. Malcolm may have misremembered or altered the name, possibly for legal reasons. Since the autobiography uses a different name, I have decided to retain Malcolm's version.

don't you plan on carpentry?" (p.38). From this point, Malcolm drew away from white people (untrustworthy) and no longer would let the term "nigger" slide off his back. This painful and jarring epiphany involved the realization that even though he identified with the white value system, he was forever excluded from privileged social-economic and political spaces, except as a subjugated Other—a person denied public-political self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-respect. No matter how bright or gifted Malcolm was, he knew at that moment that all that was left to him was the lowest sphere of political, economic, and cultural life. He would only be recognized and "trusted" in white political spaces if he accepted his subjugated, demeaned status and agency. Any notions of being recognized as equal, as a person, and participating fully in the dominant society's space of appearances were dashed that day. As he noted, it was "the first major turning point of my life" (p.37).

There is another way to understand his teacher's racist response to Malcolm. To participate in the polis' space of speaking and acting together requires mentalization and self-reflexivity, which are integral to political agency. The kind of epistemic violence exhibited in Mr. Ostrowski's response is understood as a denial of Malcolm's capacities for the mentalization and self-reflection/deliberation of political agency. Any cursory glance at history reveals that people who are constructed as inferior are considered by the perpetrators of political violence as being incapable of constructing or participating in a polis. These othered people may be seen as having some capacity for mentalization and self-reflexivity, but, because they are "inferior," they are constructed as lacking sufficient reason and deliberative capacities for exercising political agency. "They" cannot be trusted to exercise political agency and are denied appearing in the political space in their singularity.

To acknowledge the social-political apparatuses that function to deny political agency and force people to the fringes of society is not to suggest that marginalized people are devoid of self-esteem, self-respect, and self-worth—political self/agency and suchness. As noted in many situations, families living under oppressive conditions work to provide children with a sense of self-worth, which protects them, to some degree, when facing forms of political violence in public-political realms. Activist Ruby Sales illustrates this: "I grew up in the heart of Southern apartheid. And I'm not saying that I didn't realize that it existed, but our parents were spiritual geniuses who created a world and a language where the notion that I was inadequate or inferior or less-than never touched my consciousness. I grew up believing that I was a first-class human being and a first-class person, and our parents were spiritual geniuses who were able to shape a counterculture of black folk religion that raised us from disposability to being essential players in society."[7] Martin Luther King's (1998) sense of somebodiness parallels this statement. In their cases, there was sufficient trust and fidelity in the spaces of speaking and acting together in the home such that they could exercise their agency to appear, though they would, like Malcolm X, confront the painful realities of the larger political sphere as they grew up.

[7] Ruby Sales — Where Does It Hurt? | The On Being Project - The On Being Project accessed 9 June 2021.

It is important to stress that it is not only good-enough families that help. Malcolm X (eventually) and Martin Luther King Jr. relied heavily on their religious communities for interpersonal recognition and trust connected to communal spaces of speaking and acting together as equals. These communities (and African American organizations, e.g., NAACP), in many ways, functioned as political entities, affirming local spaces of speaking and acting together—affirming political selves/agencies. They, in turn, established sufficient spaces of trust wherein members could risk appearing, could risk being vulnerable in exercising political agency, which accompanied sufficient self-esteem, self-respect, and self-confidence. To a large degree, these spaces made inoperative the political violence of the larger society. Moreover, these spaces undergirded the courage African American men and women displayed in affirming their self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-respect as they engaged in the larger political field and faced forms of direct and indirect political violence.

It is easy to see why the forms of political violence directed toward African Americans were and are not justifiable, but they nevertheless must be explained given the framework above. These forms of political violence are unjust because they 1) involve apparatuses of depersonalization and civic distrust and infidelity, 2) deny "inferior" individuals' capacities for mentalization, self-reflexiveness, and self-deliberation (political agency), and 3) exclude or marginalize persons who are deemed "inferior" from participating in public-political life. In other words, forms of political violence represent not simply the denial of Others' political agencies, but a denial of the very polis' spaces of speaking and acting together vis-à-vis Othered people. If we agree that politics is humankind's "most proper dimension," (Agamben, 2011, p.xiii), wherein mutual personal recognition founds individuals' abilities to actualize their potential, then political violence represents the eclipse of this most proper dimension of participation and flourishing for Othered individuals and groups. In brief, the *moment and relation* of political violence signifies a contradiction—political violence, which involves perpetrators speaking and acting together, cannot create or maintain the polis vis-à-vis the targets of the violence. Political violence, at its core, is a denial of political belonging and it is, therefore, not justifiable.

Would this view hold true for the understandable revolutionary violence directed toward white people and political-economic apparatuses that support racism? I want to address this in two ways. First, the moment of political violence—self-defense, revolutions, or otherwise—entails a narrowing, if not absence, of mentalization, self-reflection, and personal recognition (of the Other). Speaking of the perpetrator of violence, one's political self/agency is not complex, but rather narrow, simplified into binary thinking. It is equivalent to what analysts call an enactment, when one is caught in the grips of an intense emotional interaction wherein one's capacity for self-reflection, agency, and deliberation are diminished. Asserting one's political self and agency in the case of violent self-defense or insurrection means denying the political agency and self of the Other. I believe Martin Luther King's (and others') nonviolent resistance was a recognition of this. To preserve the possibility of a space of appearances between African Americans and white people, he believed that recognizing and treating whites as persons, as political agents, was necessary. To retain a complex political self and agency, to

exercise the capacities for mentalization and deliberation in the presence of intense emotional moments, requires individual and collective discipline. To submit to political violence of self-defense or insurrection would affirm one's political agency and personhood, while denying the Other's.

Let me say a bit more about why political violence of the victims of political violence is an unjustifiable aspect of political violence, even in self-defense. Certainly violent acts of self-defense (as Malcolm X said he and others had a right to) would be completely understandable, as would acts of insurrection (e.g., Haiti). While understandable, *moments and relations* of defensive violence, like other moments of political violence, establish relations that are anti-political with regard to the objects of violence, even as they may be aimed at creating a political space. This, then, means even political violence that is motivated by self-defense, while understandable, is not justified. Let me rush to say that this is not a pacifist perspective.

As already noted, sometimes political violence is completely understandable, perhaps even laudable. By saying it is not justifiable only means I am removing any and all forms of rationalization that prevent individuals from accepting responsibility for harm done to Othered persons. The long history of justifying political violence functions to salve the consciences of those who commit the violence and those who support it, whether in self-defense or not.

I am arguing that by examining the moment and relation of political violence it becomes clear that political violence is not justifiable, which means that even when it is understandable, one is obliged to face and accept responsibility for the various harms caused. It is rare for people who justify acts of political violence to acknowledge and grieve for the Other or to experience guilt. Indeed, in acts of political violence, those who are Othered are not grievable and persons who are not grievable are marginalized or excluded from political spaces—even in death they are not remembered or grievable.

The failure to take responsibility and grieve is yet another consequence of political violence that ejects the dead from the space of appearances—from the space of remembrance. To be sure, there are truth and reconciliation commissions that have acknowledged the consequences of political violence. There also have been acknowledgements by political leaders for the harms done to native peoples by colonizers. While these are important, they are often decades or centuries in the making. Moreover, often many citizens may not agree with recognizing the harm or acknowledging guilt, since they were not directly involved. Worse, people may continue to justify, even celebrate, acts of political violence perpetrated by their ancestors, whether in self-defense or not. It is rare to have someone embrace Lao-Tzu's stance about political violence of war: "His enemies are not demons, but human beings like himself. He does not wish them personal harm.

Nor does he rejoice in victory. How could he rejoice in victory and delight in the slaughter of men? He enters a battle gravely, with sorrow and great compassion, as if he

were attending a funeral."[8] It is rarer still for people to acknowledge that political violence, in whatever form, is not a justifiable means of attaining seemingly just ends, which leaves only nonviolent resistance as a just means of political change. Nonviolent resistance is just because it acknowledges the personhood and political agency/self of the Other, leaving open the possibility of engaging in the political space of appearances with one's opponents.

Conclusion

In ending, let me reiterate my interest in this topic and why it is timely. The climate emergency we face comes with increasing emotional responses as we experience more extreme and deadly weather events and declining resources of the earth. Competition within and between states will rise and, with it, the likelihood of myriad forms of political violence. Instead of dealing with the psychological traumas associated with violence, psychological professionals and organizations need to engage in discourses regarding violence as a means of attaining social, economic, and political goals. Put differently, those in the psychological professions who work to create spaces of speaking and acting together, who seek to deepen and expand capacities for mentalization, self-reflexiveness/deliberativeness, and agency, need to participate in political discourses vis-à-vis political violence. This, in my view, includes making a case that political violence, from psychosocial perspectives, is not justifiable, which, in turn, can lead to conversations into what means are justifiable to meet the demands we face in the Anthropocene Age. We need to cease trying to justify political violence. While I do not believe in any way that my perspective is conclusive, I do hope it furthers our deliberations regarding political violence and methods of political change.

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[8] Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu Chapter Thirty-One (thetaoteching.com) accessed 9 June 2021.

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