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# Liberal Imperialism or Where Good Conscience Slumbers: Juxtaposing the Liberal Peace with the Philosophical Approaches of Lévinas and Derrida

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## **Abstract**

In 1989, so-called ‘actually existing socialism’ collapsed, and for the next few decades the West seemed to have won the ideological fight, regarding the way society, politics, and the economy were to be organised. In the discipline of peace studies this led to a hegemonic status of the liberal peace in terms of both theory and practice. Lately, however, the liberal peace has been faced with increased criticism. Liberal peacebuilding seems unable to respond to the needs and wishes of people affected by violent conflict. Its tactics are highly standardised, and aim at engineering a specific set of conditions supposed to ensure a sustainable peace. Most often, these tactics fail to institutionalise the promised peace. Moreover, they display neo-colonial tendencies, as the ability to define and institute peace is ascribed to those living in peace, while those immersed in conflict are expected to receive whatever action plan has been declared most suitable for them. This is highly problematic, as those living in peace also happen to benefit from living in the core of globally operating social, political, and economic power relations. The liberal peace has thus been increasingly recognised in its imperial character. What has not been thoroughly researched, however, is how this imperial character of the liberal peace might be connected to very basic epistemological assumptions Western philosophy, and with it Western academia, holds concerning the subject, rationality, understanding and truth.

In this thesis I shall investigate exactly this connection and try to show, how deeply the concepts and practices of the liberal peace operate within a specifically Western understanding of what it means to be a human being, and how this human being comprehends and engages with the world. I will argue that it is, again, this understanding that leads us to a specific conception of what is needed in order to create a politically lasting peace. I shall first offer a thorough analysis of the discourse, condition and practice of liberal peace, as presented by its proponents, and contrast them with the downsides of liberal history, politics, and economics. Second, I shall introduce two philosophers critical of the Western tradition of epistemology: Emmanuel Lévinas and Jacques Derrida. Last, I shall juxtapose the approaches of Lévinas and Derrida to liberal peace, searching for both the criticism and the alternatives they might have to offer to a highly liberal approach to peace.

**Keywords:** liberal imperialism, social contract, rational subject, Lévinas, Derrida, (non)violence, performed peace, deconstruction



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Hunger or destituteness (*dénuement*) are not formal structures to signify the radical and elusive alterity of the Other; they are not metaphors. The Other is a destitution and a hunger; he/she is concretely in danger of dying, and when I meet his/her 'proletarian nakedness' I could kill him/her by my indifference. The Other is a dying Other or a dying part [...]. Accordingly I am responsible for his/her life.

– Annabel Herzog<sup>1</sup>

The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti writes that if you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do it is to tell their story and to start with 'secondly'. Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story.

– Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Herzog, 2002, p. 210

<sup>2</sup> Adichie, in: Kahlenberg, 2014, p. 4-5



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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Content – Liberalism and a Philosophy of Peace

“Human affairs proceed in their intricate, endlessly varied, and unpredictable paths, but occasionally events occur that are taken to be sharp turning points in history.”<sup>3</sup> One of these events that – as 1945 or 9/11 – wedged itself like a qualitative fissure into the timeline of our history is the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. With it, a previously bipolar world of contested political strategies was suddenly placed under the only guiding star left. This ideology was to lead, not only its followers, but all humanity towards ever greater progress, freedom and above all, peace.<sup>4</sup> The collapse of so called ‘actually existing socialism’ bequeathed humanity with a single ideologically legitimate and practically plausible option for the structuring of social and political life. Time had come for an era of peace lead by the knowledge and experience of the Cold War’s victor, situated on the Western side of the former global division. Thus, the guiding star and the peace it was supposed to lead to were not so much about peace *per se*; rather, they were about promoting a specific political project. The peace to follow the anarchic balance-of-power politics that had marked the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had a *name*, and any hope for the future had to lie within it. The new era of peace was to be *liberal*.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, the story is not that simple. Not only is the liberal peace far from homogeneous, but lately its practices have also received severe criticism. Unable to adequately respond to the needs of the population living in contexts of violent conflict, liberal peacebuilding has been, at best, called ‘virtual’, ‘a chimera’, and at worst, ‘imperial’ and ‘neo-colonial’.<sup>6</sup> In short, the liberal peace was accused of becoming violent. Suggestions have been made to turn

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<sup>3</sup> Chomsky, 2010, p. 3

<sup>4</sup> In this thesis I will discuss different interpretations of violence and peace that vary both in nature and specificity. The liberal peace operates with a narrow understanding of violence – mostly as direct – and relates peace to a specific set of principles, the implementation of which are thought enough to secure sustainable peace. (See: chapters 2.1 and 4.2.1) Lévinas and Derrida, on the other hand, regard as violent any action that disrespects the singularity of a particular being. Violence, then, is already found in our basic form of judgement that places something particular under something more general in order to capture its essence. Both Lévinas and Derrida are therefore hesitant to define a specific condition that could ensure peace. To them, peace cannot be conceptualised or predetermined. It is a process into the unknown that should be lead by a deep concern for the singularity of the Other. (See: chapters 3 and 4)

<sup>5</sup> See: Behnke, 2008, p. 21; Bush, in: Rhodes, 2003, p.137; Chandler, 2004, p. 59; Cooper, 2007, p. 613; Paris, 2002, pp. 637-638; Richmond, 2007, pp. 207-208 & 223

<sup>6</sup> See for example: Richmond, 2007, pp. 204-205; Richmond, 2009, p. 567

away from the mechanic and highly standardised institutionalisation of universal, liberal agendas, in order to give room to the particular, the indigenous, the local.<sup>7</sup> Yet, it remains unclear, how this new turn in peace and conflict studies can evade the problems of domination, which cling to the still hegemonic discourse and practice of the liberal peace. As Andreas T. Hirblinger and Claudia Simens suggest, the renewed concern for the local still fails to fully recognise the humanity of people affected by violent conflict. Scholars, they write, “talk about ‘locals’ not as humans, but in terms of abstract categories”<sup>8</sup>, which are then used to identify who could potentially assist and who will undermine the peacebuilding process. Scholars and practitioners critical of the liberal project thus continue to engage in the production of identities that homogenise and essentialise an actually plural and internally varied group of human beings.<sup>9</sup>

The problem with this identification is threefold. First, the production of identities is reserved to very few. Second, the identities constructed are not mere categories of thought, used to better understand the complexities of war and conflict. Peacebuilding physically intervenes into lives, whereby the being lost, or saved of a life is often influenced by or dependent on the identity given. Last, peace missions operate along a geographical division, which links the production of identities, the knowledge of peace and the ordering of an intervention to political and economic power. Violence – most often understood as direct physical assault – is specifically defined to match the problems of the global South. Accordingly, interventions rarely take place in the global North – that is, the West. It is needless to point to the historical continuity of this division, and a much older and much less camouflaged practice of intervention: colonialism. In sum, it almost seems as if recent criticism to the liberal peace is not critical enough.<sup>10</sup>

Where does this inability to receive another human being for what he or she is spring from? Why the need to categorise, to superimpose identities, and, with it, to dominate, and ultimately exploit? In the following thesis, I would like to argue that these are not mere questions of politics, economy, or the law. They are posed to the human condition in its entirety. Peace, before all else, is a question of philosophy. To approach peace, we need to know how we relate to the world, to each other and to ourselves. That is, we must reflect and constantly reconsider our assumptions with regards to ontology and epistemology, always shaped by their own time and place. The Enlightenment, for example, – the philosophical root of the liberal peace – defends the

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<sup>7</sup> See for example: Mac Ginty, 2008, pp. 143-154; Richmond, 2009, p. 566

<sup>8</sup> Hirblinger/Simons, 2014, p. 2

<sup>9</sup> See: Hirblinger/Simons, 2014, pp. 2-7

<sup>10</sup> See: Appeltshauser, 2014, p. 9-21; Polat, 2010, p. 317

values of freedom, reason, and the autonomous, rational subject. Yet, it equally harbours thoughts of racism, and is used to defend colonialism as a mission to civilise others. Above all, however, it is a particular, European project. The liberal peace, by building upon the Enlightenment's foundations, might therefore never escape the violence of its Eurocentric roots.<sup>11</sup> It is therefore necessary for peace scholars and practitioners to understand the liberal project in its particularity, and to engage in discussions that present different approaches to knowledge, subjectivity, the social, and, with it, the possibility of peace; approaches that are perhaps more fit to our times.

Consequently, I<sup>12</sup> shall test the following assumptions: Peace research and peacebuilding will continue to fail in their attempts to build sustainable peace if they remain restricted to the Enlightenment-shaped Western tradition of thought and its *doxai* concerning the rational subject, the power of reason, and the nature of freedom. Therefore, peace will not be found by constantly revising political and institutional suggestions as to how a peaceful society can be built and maintained. Instead, peace research needs to engage in a much more fundamental discussion with regards to the conception of knowledge and truth, the nature of subjectivity, and the latter's engagement with and in the world. Peace research needs to let philosophy back in. Only thus might an answer to the violent and imperial character of the liberal peace be found.<sup>13</sup>

## 1.2 Methodological Considerations

This thesis will thus operate between disciplinary borders. On the one side, its inquiry is to be situated in the discipline of peace and conflict studies, since understanding the causes of violence and inquiring into the possibilities for peace are its major concern.<sup>14</sup> The form this thesis takes, on the other hand, is that of a philosophical analysis. At its heart lies a close reading of and engagement with primary literature by Emmanuel Lévinas and Jacques Derrida. In a discipline mainly influenced by the social sciences and empirical research, this is just as unusual as it is

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<sup>11</sup> See: Harpham, 1994, pp. 532-539

<sup>12</sup> I write in the first person, singular for two reasons. First, as shall be more extensively discussed in chapter 4.2.1, I agree with Appeltshauser that research is highly political, rather than neutral. I therefore think it important not to make the author disappear in the texts that he or she writes and with it hide that every author writes from a specific point of view. Second and in consequence, as I will show in chapter 3.1, Lévinas argues that we can never take another position than our own. This, I think, should be made equally clear, by renouncing the use of a more 'neutral' style.

<sup>13</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 113-117

<sup>14</sup> For further information on the discipline of peace studies, again, see for example: Alfs, 1995, p. 26; Koppe, 2006, p. 17

necessary. Philosophy in this context is unusual, because this means that I will not include my own fieldwork. Any examples I use have been researched by other scholars, and are shaped by those scholars' own foci and concerns. Moreover, what is taken as primary philosophical data – the texts of Lévinas and Derrida – would be deemed secondary by most social scientists.<sup>15</sup> Conversely, a philosophical analysis is necessary, because, as has been argued above, the hegemonic status of the liberal peace takes the universality of its underlying philosophical assumptions for granted, and is therefore trapped in its own Eurocentric, violent, and imperial ways. A critical reconsideration of what we think natural with regards to our human condition is urgently called for within peace research, if new possibilities for peace are to be sought and attempts at peace are to be made. There is a need for peace studies to engage with philosophy in order to change its violent practice.

This is not to say that peace research should restrict itself to philosophical consideration. On the contrary, additional research is needed to mediate between the abstractedness of philosophical thought and the tangled nature of everyday life, and the complexities of conflict settings and of mechanisms and structures that perpetuate inequality and exploitation. Likewise, in the thesis at hand I will not be able to offer specific advice as to how politics, policies, or projects could or should be newly shaped. Rather, I engage in both a meta-analytical consideration of peace research and a foundational discussion on the philosophical assumptions with which current peace scholars and practitioners operate. I ask what other philosophical approaches there might be, and how our understanding of peace could be shaped in a different way, when considering the thought of Lévinas and Derrida. My approach, therefore, is theoretical, and focuses on the discursive structure used to uphold the liberal peace condition. Any translation into practice will have to follow elsewhere.

The choice to focus on the philosophical approaches of Lévinas and Derrida has four reasons. First, by criticising the approaches to peace, which are based on the assumptions of the original social contract<sup>16</sup>, especially Lévinas, but also Derrida, offer a direct link to the liberal peace. Second, Lévinas and Derrida do not present two approaches independent from another. With regards to the concern to understanding the possibility of peace, their philosophical approaches are intricately entwined; they form a dialogue. Third, bearing in mind the advice of James Der Derian and Michael J. Saphiro that alternatives to hegemonic violence are found at the

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<sup>15</sup> See: Adams et al., 2007

<sup>16</sup> For further elaboration on the conceptualisation of an original social contract see chapter 2.1.1.2.

margins of an established discourse,<sup>17</sup> I believe it important to reintroduce Lévinas' and Derrida's dialogue on peace into peace research. Last, the two philosophers offer insightful ideas to many of the issues and problems the liberal peace is faced with. In this thesis I shall work with a restricted number of texts by both philosophers that I regard as exemplary regarding the basic theoretical features of both approaches and their implications for the possibility of peace.

However, I find it also important to state that both Lévinas and Derrida, despite their Jewish, and in Lévinas' case Lithuanian<sup>18</sup> as well as in Derrida's case Algerian<sup>19</sup> background, are philosophers writing and researching within Western academia and its tradition. That is, despite their critical approach to Western thought, they do have certain roles closely linked to academic inequality and with it epistemic violence. They are both white, and they are both male. My focus on these two philosophers, therefore, might seem absurd to some thinkers critical of the liberal project and more in favour of post-colonial theory and de-colonising research. Their concern with regards to the mechanisms of exclusion of scholars from most parts of the globe, as well as the legitimacy of field research and the structures of power the latter conveys, is to be taken seriously.<sup>20</sup> However, in my view, it should not lead to a converse discrimination. I shall therefore take a pragmatic stance. By merely taking into account the approaches of Lévinas and Derrida, I will have to insist on my thesis' incompleteness with regards to an inclusive philosophical critique of the liberal peace. Equally, I will not gain a comprehensive picture on the way our human condition could be understood and conceptualised. However, it is, in my view, still important not to negate the valuable insights, Lévinas and Derrida have to offer when it comes to peace.

### 1.3 Research Question and Thesis Structure

What follows below, then, is an analysis of the liberal peace and its philosophical foundations, which shall be contrasted with an alternative philosophical dialogue on peace held between Lévinas and Derrida. As guiding research questions I ask how the approaches of Lévinas and Derrida can help to better understand the imperial character of the liberal peace and if, beyond all criticism, they are able to provide an alternate vision of peace. Thus, in the second chapter, I shall

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<sup>17</sup> See: Der Derian, 1989, pp. 4-7; Saphiro, 1989, pp. 12-15

<sup>18</sup> See: Bernard-Deonals, 2005, p. 70

<sup>19</sup> See: Ofrat, 2001, p. 3

<sup>20</sup> See for example: Appeltshausser, 2014, pp. 10-18; Kahlenberg, 2014, pp. 1-8

introduce the liberal peace, as it viewed by both proponents and opponents. In the third chapter, I will present the philosophical approaches of Lévinas and Derrida, to then juxtapose them with the liberal peace in the fourth, in which I shall attempt to better explain the imperial character of liberal project, and search for alternate possibilities for peace.

## 2 Current Affairs – The Peace that Colonises<sup>21</sup>

Today, the liberal peace is mainly understood in terms of “technical solutions”<sup>22</sup> for the building of peace in societies that face, or have faced, violent conflicts. Yet, I shall argue in the following chapter that the liberal peace, being a “concept, condition and practice”<sup>23</sup> all at the same time, is highly multifaceted. As a *concept*, or rather, as Oliver P. Richmond puts it, as discourse and framework, the liberal peace entails ideas, as to how a political, social and economic system is to be organised. It is presented as the beacon of hope for everlasting prosperity and progress, proven by those already living in its *condition*. It is also a *practice*, as

leading states, international organisations and international financial institutions [attempt] to promote their version of peace through peace-support interventions, control of international financial architecture, support for state sovereignty and the international status quo.<sup>24</sup>

With such conceptual and material comprehensiveness, the liberal peace has both scholarly and practically, has gained a hegemonic status, fortified by the notion that a liberal peace is desirable for as well as acceptable and suitable to all societies and states. Consequently, neither peace research nor peacebuilders can currently find a way around it.<sup>25</sup>

Yet, the ‘end of history’<sup>26</sup> was of short duration, and the liberal peace project has not been left unchallenged. In fact, Richmond argues that, after its flourishing years of the 1990s and early 2000s, the liberal peace is now suffering from a lack of legitimacy and has been accused of being ethically bankrupt, subject to double standards, coercive and conditional, acultural, unconcerned with social welfare, and unfeeling and insensitive towards its subjects. It is tied to Western and liberal conceptions of the state, to institutions and not to the local.<sup>27</sup>

Highly standardised, the peace to be built and spread had become a “peace from IKEA”<sup>28</sup>, and is in danger of being disclosed as “a tragedy masquerading as a farce, as a bonfire of neoliberal

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<sup>21</sup> See: Richmond, 2007, p. 224

<sup>22</sup> Heathershaw, 2008, p. 597

<sup>23</sup> Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 143

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> See: Cooper, 2007, p. 613; Doyle, 1983, pp. 212-224 & 232; Marshall, 2010, p. 244; Paris, 2002, pp. 637-638; Richmond, 2006, pp. 292-295

<sup>26</sup> The ‘end of history’ is a phrase mostly associated with Francis Fukuyama, who, after the end of the Cold War and the victory of liberalism, thought conflict and, with it, historical change to have ended for good. (See: Fukuyama, 2006)

<sup>27</sup> Richmond, 2009, p. 557

<sup>28</sup> Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 145. Mac Ginty uses the metaphor of IKEA as the liberal peace thinks that peace can be engineered the same way in every society and that it needs the same set of principles wherever it is implemented.

certainties”<sup>29</sup>, disregarding local practices and often cooperating with social elites. According to Richmond’s view, this is a peace that colonises, because it allows some people to decide which state of affairs is best for all, and to dictate the means and impose the measures, through which this desired state can be achieved. The liberal peace, thus, has been recognised in its violence.<sup>30</sup>

In this chapter I will try to bring some clarity into the multifaceted nature of the liberal peace project, by tracing in detail the argument made above. In the first subchapter, I will consider the apparent upside of liberal peace, by subsequently introducing its discourse, condition and practice. In the second, I will look at the downside of liberalism, in order to shed some light on what is being meant by a violent peace, or a peace that colonises.

## 2.1 The Liberal Legacy<sup>31</sup>

When in The Snows of Kilimanjaro, Julian tells his friend, ‘The very rich are different from you and me,’ his friend replies, ‘Yes, they have more money.’ But the liberals are fundamentally different.<sup>32</sup>

As I have stated above, the liberal peace gained its highest popularity after the end of the Cold War and the related downfall of ‘actually existing socialism’. However, its historical background as well as the ideological foundations of its political project are not as recent. This becomes evident when focus is laid on the liberal character of the peace in question. According to Raymond Geuss, the term ‘liberal’ first appeared around 1810-11 in Spain, where it was used to label a political party. Only afterwards was a prehistoric account of the term re-constructed, in order to legitimise and theoretically fortify its political meaning. Starting almost from the term’s introduction, then, ‘liberal’ was used to refer to two things: a theoretical discourse and a specific political engagement.<sup>33</sup> From the outset it was a *concept* and a specific political *practice*. Its *condition* came with a broader political legitimation and institutionalisation of liberal ideas and

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<sup>29</sup> Cooper, 2007, p. 606

<sup>30</sup> See: Cooper, 2007, p. 606; Chandler, 2004, p. 59; Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 145; Richmond, 2007, pp. 204 & 224

<sup>31</sup> See: Doyle, 1983, Title

<sup>32</sup> Doyle, 1983, p. 235

<sup>33</sup> See: Geuss, 2002, pp. 312-322

values. In the following subchapter I will introduce the liberal peace along the lines of its characterisation as ‘concept, condition and practice’.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.1.1 History and Ideology – Tracing a Concept

The *discourse* on liberal peace mainly draws its ideas from three different theoretical uses of the term liberal: first, from political philosophy; second, from the discipline of international relations; and last, from a particular understanding of economy. All three find their beginning in the Enlightenment. They are combined in Kant’s theory on *Perpetual Peace*, which centres around a specific notion of the nature of human beings, as well as the social, political and economic system that is to be created in order to promote freedom and well-being.<sup>35</sup> Below, I will consider all three uses of the term. However, as “[t]heories are born in their own age”<sup>36</sup>, any theoretical consideration of the ideas of liberalism has to equally take into account the historical driving force that brought them forth.

#### 2.1.1.1 Peace – A History

Historically, Richmond points out, the theoretical roots of the liberal peace can be traced as far back as the late Middle Ages, culminating, as mentioned, in the Enlightenment.<sup>37</sup> They spring from demands for the secularisation of Christian power but readily transform into a debate, on how to contain the ambitions of conquest and the greed of rulers, in order to lessen the chance of interstate warfare, and at the same time prevent the chaos and horrors of civil war. In their first two phases, demands for the peace that was to become liberal, were thus driven by a deep unease with regards to both Papal as well as monarchic abuses of power. After that, the early stages of the Enlightenment led the thinking about peace onto two different roads. One was taken by the Revolution of the English bourgeoisie, which, while also discussing concepts such as welfare and

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<sup>34</sup> Within the spatial and temporal scope of this thesis, this account cannot but remain a sketch. Especially a deeper and more intensive study of the historical and ideological precursors of present-day liberalism has to follow elsewhere. However, the account given here is regarded as sufficiently detailed to be of relevant use for the analysis to follow.

<sup>35</sup> See: Kersting, 1992, pp. 342-347

<sup>36</sup> Kende, 1989, p. 245

<sup>37</sup> According to Richmond it is heavily built on the “philosophical and political debates that emerged from the writings of Hobbes, Macchiavelli, Abbe St. Pierre, Kant, Rousseau, Locke Paine, Penn, Cobden, Mill, Bentham, and Grotius” (Richmond, 2009, p. 559).

equality, mainly stressed the notion of peace as economic “utility and profitableness”<sup>38</sup>, and introduced the idea that peace should be sought in the pursuit of protecting private property. The other road found its way to pre-revolutionary France, where “human rights and freedom were much more the ‘raison’ of their struggle than practical utility or usefulness”<sup>39</sup>. Interestingly, both roads introduced the idea of a social contract that human beings, using their power of reason, in order to escape the dangers and threats of the state of nature. But their emphases were different. It was Immanuel Kant, who – as “a pragmatic synthesis of Hobbes’ sense of political reality and Rousseau’s ideal of justice”<sup>40</sup> – combined the two different strands in his treatise on *Perpetual Peace*, and with whom the Enlightenment reached its apex.<sup>41</sup>

#### 2.1.1.2 The Dawn of Reason

The project of the Enlightenment, Geoffrey G. Harpham argues, was to reassemble the entire philosophical discourse into a public debate that is answerable to a truth not dictated by the church, the ruler or the nation. The entire cognitive process should be founded in reason, and reason alone. According to Kant<sup>42</sup>, for example, reason not only provides us with the forms necessary for objectively true judgements, but also entails the means through which ethical certainties can be gained. Putting both theoretical truth and ethical guidance down to reason brought with it a new importance for the reasonable and rational individual.<sup>43</sup> Arguments were brought forth to secure individual freedom, one of which was the idea of the original social contract.<sup>44</sup>

The basic idea of social contract theories is that human beings are to be protected from the threat they pose to each other in the state of nature, through the formation of some sort of government. This government is legitimised by an original social contract, to which human beings agree thanks to reason. The social contract usually is presented as logical response to a

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<sup>38</sup> Kende, 1989, p. 237

<sup>39</sup> Kende, 1989, p. 238

<sup>40</sup> Kersting, 1992, p. 359

<sup>41</sup> See: Kende, 1989, pp. 234-240

<sup>42</sup> It is to be mentioned at this point that considering Kant as part of the early liberalists is not an uncontested view. Geuss for example, regards only the “classical liberalism of Constant, Mill, and Tocqueville” (Geuss, 2002, p. 323) as the real liberal position (see: Geuss, 2002, pp. 322-323), whereas Michael W. Doyle clearly considers Kant as a precursor of liberal ideals (see: Doyle, 1983, pp. 206-212).

<sup>43</sup> This is shown for example by Kant’s second categorical imperative to never treat a human being only as a means to an end, but always also as an end in itself. (See: Kant, 1999, p. 54-55)

<sup>44</sup> See: Harpham, 1994, pp. 531-539; Kant, 1956, B132-B169; Kant, 1999, pp. 319-412; Kersting, 1992, pp. 342-355

specific hypothesis on how human beings think and act in a lawless space – the state of nature. This state is imagined as violent, immoral and egoistic. Human beings in the state of nature are constantly subject to threat, insecurity and possible warfare. In order to prevent this hypothetical scenario, the social contract is to limit each individual's latitude of action, so that it can no longer interfere with the freedom of others. Consequently, the task of confining individual freedom is given to the ruler, the state, and its legal institutions.<sup>45</sup>

However, conceptions of the state of nature, the arguments brought forth for the founding of a social contract, as well as the political system to be created, differ from theorist to theorist. Hobbes, for example, describes the state of nature as total anarchy, which entails the constant threat of violence “of every man, against every man”<sup>46</sup>. Against the background of constant fear of death, reason therefore cannot but suggest the conclusion of a contract, which transfers both power and violence to a supreme ruler – the Leviathan – in order to contain individual passion and greed. According to Hobbes, the social contract, “once made, [...] is irrevocable”<sup>47</sup>, no matter, which means of coercion are being applied by the ruler.<sup>48</sup>

This notion is carried on by Kant in his arguing against resistance. However, Kant objects to Hobbes that the ruler should not be left unaccountable for any wrongdoing against his population. Instead, the latter has to be able to assume that it is protected from any harm done by the hands of the ruler. A state, therefore, has to base its founding principles on a republican civil constitution that secures freedom, equality and autonomy in interpersonal relations by imposing public rights and laws. Two things are important at this point. First, as Kersting writes, Kant does not intend the “community of right” to be “a community of solidarity among the needy but a community for self-protection among those who have the power to act”<sup>49</sup>. Second, equality in this context only refers to juridical equality, leaving open the possibility of inequality with regard to both skills and possessions.<sup>50</sup>

The protection of private property within the social contract is also advanced by John Locke, yet for different reasons. According to Locke, the state of nature is less anarchic than described by Hobbes. Social norms to respect the “life, health, liberty, and possessions”<sup>51</sup> of

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<sup>45</sup> See: Atterton, 1992, p. 59; Bahner, 1984; p. 6, Richmond, 2007, p. 222

<sup>46</sup> Hobbes, 1969, p. 188

<sup>47</sup> Bagby, 2002, p.74

<sup>48</sup> See: Hobbes, 1968, 183-201

<sup>49</sup> Kersting, 1992, p. 345

<sup>50</sup> See: Kant, 1992, pp. A232-A280; Kersting, 1992, pp. 345-354

<sup>51</sup> Locke, 1980, p. 9

others already exist, and so does trade. Insecurity is only evoked with the development of inequality. Reason then leads to the formation a civil society and a government, with the intention to protect the “lives, liberties and *estates* [emphasis added]”<sup>52</sup> of its citizens.<sup>53</sup> However, this government, unlike that envisioned by Hobbes and Kant, can be dissolved, should it no longer serve the preservation of self-interest.<sup>54</sup>

Yet, however different the theories, they all introduced peace as a form of governance based on the original will of the people. Thus, from a philosophical perspective the heritage of Enlightenment lies in “ideals of political emancipation, universal rights, the autonomous subject, and the reign of reason”<sup>55</sup>, politically unified through the social contract, as opposed to civil war or the arbitrary rule of monarchs. This idea of peace anchored in the hope that humankind will necessarily and constantly progress toward the better, if not the Good. As reason spreads, Kant argues in his essay on *Perpetual Peace*, more and more states will be founded on republican *constitutions*. Created thus, they will be less likely to go to war, and in the end form, if not a world republic, then a federation that will bind all states together under *international* law. Within this federation, the *cosmopolitan* right to hospitality is to guarantee prosperity through especially economic exchange among states.<sup>56</sup> While this subchapter focused more on the philosophical background that lead to Kant’s introduction of republican constitutionalism, I shall now turn to liberal thoughts on both international relations and free trade.

### 2.1.1.3 Balance-of-Power versus International Law

Though discussed most prominently in the discipline of international relations, the distinction between an international arena dominated by balance-of-power politics and one being structured by cooperation and international law was already discussed during the Enlightenment.<sup>57</sup> However, with the development of international relations as a discipline, the two scenarios took hold within opposing schools of thought regarding the international sphere: realism and

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<sup>52</sup> Locke, 1980, p. 66

<sup>53</sup> See: Locke, 1980, pp. 8-9

<sup>54</sup> See: Bagby, 2002, p. 99; Locke, 1980, pp. 8-9 & 66; Macpherson, 1980, pp.xvi-xxi

<sup>55</sup> Harpham, 1994, p. 532

<sup>56</sup> See: Behnke, 2008, pp. 518-521; Kende, 1989, p. 240

<sup>57</sup> See: Kant, 1992, p. 313

liberalism.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, I will argue that, while realists draw on Hobbes' state of nature in order to describe the international sphere, liberalists draw on Locke's. Both have in common the consideration that the state is the most important entity in the international realm. Internationally, the state takes the place of the individual. And already the views of liberalism and realism beg only at securing its own interests, which revolve around gaining power. Unsurprisingly, cooperation and social norms are thought of as scarce and fragile. Like in the Hobbesian state of nature the threat of war is always present. The international sphere is characterised by anarchy and chaos, and the only way to prevent war from happening is to maintain a balance of power.<sup>59</sup>

Conversely, liberalism regards this kind of politics as disrupted with the introduction of "liberal principles and institutions"<sup>60</sup>. To liberalists, the international sphere is not adequately described by chaos and anarchy. As in the state of nature described by Locke, cooperation does happen, and so does trade. This, Andrew Moravcsik argues, is because, even in the realm of international relations, the individual, its freedom and interests never cease to be the primary point of reference. Hence, civil society does not only shape the process, through which the state of nature is left behind and a government is formed; it also influences the way international relations are structured. "[I]ndividuals and privately-constituted groups"<sup>61</sup> of both domestic and international civil society try to secure their interests by steering governmental actions within as well as among states. As a consequence, the international sphere, too, leaves the state of nature in an "evolutionary social process"<sup>62</sup> that increasingly protects private interests by institutionalising their fulfilment.<sup>63</sup>

In short, the liberal road, if walked, will leave war and chaos behind, and – by securing individual freedom and interest through international cooperation, law and trade – lead to peace, progress and prosperity. What role, then, does trade play in all of this?

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<sup>58</sup> The description of the realist and liberalist tradition in international relations here draws on an earlier exam paper by the author of this thesis, handed in on the 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2011, at the Center for Peace Studies, University of Tromsø. (See therefor: Bänninger, 2011)

<sup>59</sup> See: Morgenthau, 1994, p. 34-38; Richmond, 2007, p. 212. This is, of course, a rather crude description of the realist tradition, which – with the changing of the international sphere –has itself undergone theoretical change in order to better explain phenomena such as international agreements or transnational institutions *within* a structure of international relations that is still best explained in realist terms. (See for example: Waltz, 2000, pp. 40-41)

<sup>60</sup> Doyle, 1983, p. 205

<sup>61</sup> Moravcsik, 1992, p. 2

<sup>62</sup> Moravcsik, 1992, p. 9

<sup>63</sup> See: Doyle, 1992, pp.228-232; Moravcsik, 1992, pp. 8-9 & 36-38; Richmond, 2007, p. 212

#### 2.1.1.4 The Economy of Peace

At its core, the economic aspect of the liberal peace lies in the assumption that states are less likely to engage in war, if they “trade a lot with each other”<sup>64</sup>. To secure peace, economies ought to be without borders, and trade freely. As said, this idea is of British origin and was first introduced by William Penn. Later, Jeremy Bentham accentuated the economic utility of international laws that reduce the “sizes of armies and arms”<sup>65</sup>, and promote the emancipation of the conquered colonies. John Stuart Mill, on the other hand, argues that free trade is necessary for the formation of peacefully regulated international relations. Politically, Mill’s ideas were advanced by Richard Cobden, who is still mentioned in the context of economic post-war peacebuilding.<sup>66</sup> Yet, the perhaps most famous founding father of “[l]iberal economic theory”<sup>67</sup> is Adam Smith. According to Smith, trade is a natural affinity of human beings, and should be enhanced via a “system of natural liberty”<sup>68</sup> – the free market – based on the institution of private property and controlled but by individual owners, as opposed to the government. The market produces wealth through the division of labour, and is therefore best organised internationally, and free from any physical barriers or governmental restrictions. Consequently, an international economic order is dependent on “rules and institutions” that secure an “unimpeded circulation, across sovereign borders, of goods and money”<sup>69</sup>.<sup>70</sup>

This system matters to liberal peace theory, as it is placed within a specifically liberal conception of history, which resumes Kant’s idea of humankind constantly progressing toward the better. According to this conception, progress is initiated by economic relations, of which liberal political institutions are only a consequence. Hence, “political liberalism is the product of economic liberalism”<sup>71</sup>. They are connected to one another, as private property is not only an economic principle, but also a right. It is this double character of private property that leads constitutionalism to apply the rule of law on both the economic and the political sphere. In other words, a free market is not enough to secure a peaceful order. Only when combined with the

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<sup>64</sup> Weede, 2010, p. 206

<sup>65</sup> Kende, 1989, p. 240

<sup>66</sup> See: Kende, 1989, pp. 237-243; Mandelbaum, 2002, p. 234; Pugh, 2005, p. 24

<sup>67</sup> Doyle, 1983, p. 231

<sup>68</sup> Smith, 2005, p. 560

<sup>69</sup> Mandelbaum, 2002, pp. 11-12

<sup>70</sup> See: Mandelbaum, 2002, pp. 37 & 11-12; Pugh, 2005, p. 24; Smith, 2005, pp. 18 & 491-560; Weede, 2010, pp. 206-207

<sup>71</sup> Mandelbaum, 2002, p. 234

spread of democratic institutions and increasing international regulations, does it fulfil the liberal promise of peace.<sup>72</sup> Accordingly, the liberal peace cannot be reduced to democratic or capitalist peace; it integrates both political and economic liberal principles into a “particular kind”<sup>73</sup> of peace. It is to the condition of this peace I shall turn in the following subchapter.<sup>74</sup>

### 2.1.2 A Beautiful Friendship – The Liberal Peace Condition

The term *liberal* has now been introduced, first, as a particular strand of philosophy that focuses on the importance of individual freedom, and the political institutions needed in order to guarantee it. Second, it was seen to stand for a theoretical lineage in international relations that objects to the realist balance-of-power by pointing toward the fact of cooperation, institutionalisation, the rule of law, and agreement in the international sphere. Last, it represents an economic theory that favours the free market, the pursuit of wealth, and the protection of private property. All three approaches promise to ensure peace, and each aspect of this threefold use of the term *liberal* is already represented in Kant’s *Perpetual Peace*. Therefore, it is not surprising that the liberal peace condition does not exclude any aspect of it.

Only what used to be a republican constitution, a federation of states under international law, and the cosmopolitan right to hospitality in Kantian terms has been politically translated by Woodrow Wilson into what is today known as the “Wilsonian triad”<sup>75</sup>. This triad describes a world shaped by democracy, international arms control, and a free-market economy. Though Wilson did not see his vision fulfilled in his own life-time, the end of the Cold War, as mentioned, does seem to leave the world with “no realistic alternative to liberalism”<sup>76</sup>. From the ashes of realist balance-of-power politics rose one “set of principles binding all countries in the world, [...]. These are democracy, free markets, human rights, [...] peaceful behaviour toward other countries”<sup>77</sup>, neoliberal “development, a vibrant civil society and multilateralism”<sup>78, 79</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> Thereby, those advocating less interference from the government in economic affairs are considered neoliberals. (See: Mandelbaum, 2002, p. 30)

<sup>73</sup> Mandelbaum, 2002, p. 273

<sup>74</sup> See: Mandelbaum, 2002, pp. 30, 231-236, 265-271 & 295; Richmond, 2009, p. 559

<sup>75</sup> Mandelbaum, 2002, p. 24

<sup>76</sup> Geuss, 2002, p. 320

<sup>77</sup> Purdy, in: Bishai, 2004, p. 64

<sup>78</sup> Richmond, 2006, p. 298

<sup>79</sup> See: Chandler, 2004, pp. 59-60; Doyle, 1983, p. 216; Mandelbaum, 2002, pp. 24-25

However, despite there being no prominent counter-ideology to liberalism, the liberal peace has not become politically universal. It is maintained among a specific group of states. This group carries different names, examples of which are the ‘West’, or the ‘core’ – with the United States being “the core of the core”<sup>80</sup>. As all Western states embrace liberal principles, this geographically limited peace lead to the conclusion that “a separate peace exists among liberal states”<sup>81</sup>.<sup>82</sup> Thereby, the “liberal family”<sup>83</sup> is regarded as fundamentally different, and distinct from the rest of the world. The introducing citation of Michael Doyle almost seems to suggest, that the morally progressing, economically prosperous liberals, who show no evidence of deep-rooted conflicts of interest, are of a different quality than the rest of humankind. Clearly, this fundamentally different zone of peace needs to be expanded, in order for the rest of the world to have a shot at harvesting its fruits. Knowing, and living in peace, Richmond concludes, legitimates the transfer of the liberal peace to places that lack it. Facing zones of violent conflicts, the liberal peace becomes a mission.<sup>84</sup>

### 2.1.3 “Clean and Clear”<sup>85</sup> – The Practice of Missions and Operations

Though the end of the Cold War did bring with it a triumphal procession of liberalism, history did not end. It witnessed a change in the nature of war. No longer fought between states, wars in most cases moved into society and became civil. Together, the victory of liberal ideas and the simultaneous increase of civil warfare gave rise to demands for the United Nations (UN) and other international organisations to intervene more directly and comprehensively in the affairs of states, whose societies were at war. Peace operations, Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk argue, were revolutionised. While traditional *peacekeeping* – such as it took place in Angola or Cambodia – mainly consisted in providing “lightly armed military forces to monitor ceasefires or patrol neutral buffer zones between former combatants”<sup>86</sup>, peace now encompassed transforming and restructuring an entire state, its society and economy. The liberal peace became

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<sup>80</sup> Mandelbaum, 2002, p. 7

<sup>81</sup> Doyle, 1983, 232

<sup>82</sup> Importantly, as Doyle points out, this does not mean that wars do not occur between liberal and illiberal states. (See: Doyle, 1983, p. 206)

<sup>83</sup> Mandelbaum, 2002, p. 30

<sup>84</sup> See: Doyle, 1983, pp. 205-232; Rhodes, 2003, p. 140; Richmond, 2006, p. 298; Richmond, 2007, p. 219

<sup>85</sup> ONeal/Russet, 2001, Title

<sup>86</sup> Paris/Sisk, 2009, p. 4

peacebuilding. During the 1990s, so-called peacebuilding missions not only expanded with regard to their scope, but they also became more extensive in temporal terms. In addition to post-conflict settings, peacebuilding started to engage into the phases of pre-conflict and conflict.<sup>87</sup> As a consequence, peace interventions came to be

complex forms of global coordination involving multileveled state-non-state agreements, and extensive division of labour between governments, UN agencies, NGOs, private companies, civil society groups and militaries<sup>88</sup>.

Opposed to specific programs, such as “security sector reform, transitional justice or economic recovery”<sup>89</sup>, peacebuilding unifies these programs together with

ceasefire monitoring, formalized peace negotiations, Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), [...] civil society capacity-building, post-peace accord elections, civil service reform, good-, marketization, and economic restructuring<sup>90</sup>

into a highly standardised grand strategy.<sup>91</sup>

As it is usually the case with terms that aim at comprehensiveness, peacebuilding is not homogeneously defined. Accordingly, John Heathershaw, who argues that there are “multiple discourses of the liberal peace”<sup>92</sup>, proposes an analytical shift away from an unified conception of peacebuilding, and considers *peacebuildings* a more accurate term for the current state of affairs. However, there are certain aspects that can be generally ascribed to peacebuilding operations: first, its main actors are “leading states, international organizations and international financial institutions [IFIs]”<sup>93</sup>, as well as a vast amount of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs); second, it is said to be specifically designed to prevent the reoccurrence of violent conflict; and, third, it is approached with the idea of “peace-as-governance”<sup>94</sup>. This latter notion of peace includes the building of state institutions – preferably liberal, democratic, and market-oriented – as well as the governance of civil society through the introduction of values that fortify the political system and that simultaneously regulate, control and protect the individuals living in it.

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<sup>87</sup> This linear understanding of a conflict transgressing from ‘pre-’ via conflict to ‘post-’ is criticised by John Paul Lederach. Conflict, he argues, and the healing and reconciliation that are thought to follow it, cannot be thought of as subsequent phases. After a ceasefire, violence continues. The space of a conflict is “highly dynamic and unpredictable” (Lederach, 2010, p. 45). Thus, rather than moving in a linear pattern, violent conflict and processes of peace interweave circularly. (See: Lederach/Lederach, 2010, pp. 11-45)

<sup>88</sup> Duffield, 2007, p. 114

<sup>89</sup> Call/Cousens, 2008, p. 3

<sup>90</sup> Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 144

<sup>91</sup> See: Call/Cousens, 2008, p. 3; Cortright, 2008, pp. 4-5; Duffield, 2007, pp. 115-116; Heathershaw, 2008, p. 597; Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 144; Paris/Sisk, 2009, pp. 1-7

<sup>92</sup> Heathershaw, 2008, p. 603

<sup>93</sup> Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 144

<sup>94</sup> Richmond, 2007, p. 211

That is, as Richmond points out, no matter what specific focus peacebuilding has, its outcome mirrors the ideas of the “earliest political theorists in the Western tradition and the form of government required to create a durable peace”<sup>95</sup>. In liberal terms, this means that a state either immersed in violent conflict, or threatened by its (re)occurrence is asked to make specific liberal transitions in the political, social and economic sphere.<sup>96</sup>

Consequently, Richmond argues that the differences with regard to how peacebuilding is to be understood, are gradational and rather than being proof of multiple discourses, still operate within the framework and grand strategy of the liberal peace.<sup>97</sup> In fact, as I shall argue below, the voices outside the liberal discourse are not heard. Their bodies go hungry, and their subjectivity is denied.

## 2.2. Liberal Imperialism

The international system was therefore like a fixed price menu from which a diner could accept or reject different items. He or she could choose to skip the hors d’oeuvre, or the main course or the dessert – or go hungry altogether.<sup>98</sup>

A liberal peace, resting on the Enlightenment’s ideals of a governance based on human reason and ideas of constant progress, to be exported into the entire world, in order for the liberal peace

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<sup>95</sup> Richmond, 2007, p. 211

<sup>96</sup> See: Heathershaw, 2008, p. 603; Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 144; Paris, 2002, pp. 637-638; Paris/Sisik, 2009, pp. 1-7; Richmond, 2007, p. 211

<sup>97</sup> With regard to the gradation of peacebuilding, Richmond differentiates between a hyper-conservative, a conservative, an orthodox, and an emancipatory model of peacebuilding. The first addresses military interventions, such as they have been conducted in Somalia, the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The conservative model is less militarised, but still consists of top-down approaches, mainly led by the World Bank, the UN, and the US, whereby the building of peace is often approached via conditionality. While the orthodox model still also consists in top-down approaches, it is more aware of the importance of local ownership and hence equally advocates the bottom-up peacebuilding by NGOs. Last, the emancipatory model often criticises the coercive and conditional intervention of top-down approaches, and proposes an engagement that is more concerned with human needs and social justice. It is, according to Richmond, still liberal, as it claims the universality of liberal values, which are often dictated by donor countries (see: Richmond, 2007, p. 214-215). Similarly, Heathershaw distinguishes between state-building as being conservative, democratic peacebuilding as being orthodox, and supporting the development of a strong civil society as being emancipatory (see: Heathershaw, 2008, p. 604). On the other hand, Charles T. Call and Elisabeth M. Cousens propose the distinction among a maximalist, a minimalist and a moderate standard of peacebuilding (see: Call/Cousens, 2008, p. 7). Yet, Richmond argues that these different approaches are not distinct in interventionist practices. Often, they intertwine and one is thought to more or less linearly lead to the other – from the hyper-conservative to the emancipatory – as a society progresses from conflict to peace. (See: Richmond, 2007, pp. 215-218)

<sup>98</sup> Mandelbaum, 2002, p. 39

ever to expand: this is, in its essence, the above-described liberal heritage that the world is faced with today. It is a victorious heritage, as it has presently no serious opponent. However, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the liberal peace has not remained uncriticised. Thereby two forms of criticism exist. One is operational, trying to improve peacebuilding techniques within the existing liberal framework.<sup>99</sup> The other is more fundamental. To it, Mandelbaum's casual reference to the 'fixed price menu' seems disquietingly pointing to something else than the unquestioned victory of the liberal model. It points to those who do in fact go hungry and the gap their absence leaves in the liberal conception of history. For, the liberal interpretation of world history, thus writes Rob B. J. Walker, comes with an embarrassing subtext regarding ethnocentrism, racism, colonialism, economic greed, etc.<sup>100</sup> It silences the measures imposed and wars fought by those in power – the core – in order to uphold the political and economic system as it is. By introducing the liberal system as naturally evolved – and therefore universal –, its imperial tendencies are generously overlooked; as is its increased interventionism and the way "cookie-cutter approaches"<sup>101</sup> to peace silence the voices of the people concerned.<sup>102</sup>

Another story is told on the margins of the liberal peace discourse, just as "[e]very order rests on a forgetting of the exclusion practices through which one set of meanings has been institutionalised and various other possibilities have been marginalised."<sup>103</sup> Following Shapiro's and Der Derian's advice, I shall, in this chapter, go to these margins of political thought, theory and practice, in order to make sense of the other side of the liberal track record.<sup>104</sup> I will do this by first looking at the above-mentioned subtext of the liberal peace history. Second, I shall focus on the imperial character of the liberal peace. Last, my attention is brought to a call from within the community of peace scholars to listen to and give voice to the 'local other'.

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<sup>99</sup> See: Richmond, 2007, p. 211

<sup>100</sup> See: Walker, 1993, p. 28

<sup>101</sup> Call/Cousens, 2008, p. 14

<sup>102</sup> See: Barkawi/Laffey, 1999, pp. 407-420; Behnke, 2008, pp. 514 & 525-56; Bishai, 2004, pp. 48-65; Chandler, 2004, pp. 61-76; Crush, 2003, pp. 1-9; Duffield, 2007, pp. 112-131; Henkel/Stirrat, 2002, p. 182; Macpherson, 1965, pp. 38-45; Pugh, 2005, p. 15; Rhodes, 2002, pp. 132-139; Tilly, 1985, pp. 169-177

<sup>103</sup> Shapiro, 1989, p. 15

<sup>104</sup> See: Der Derian, 1989, pp. 4-7; Shapiro, 1989, pp. 13-15

### 2.2.1 The Other Side of History

A specific kind of pain, Harpham argues, comes along with the reason-seeking ideals of the Enlightenment. It is the pain of the private subject asked to submit itself to a truth not compatible with interest, pleasure or desire. The Enlightenment, he concludes, was hence not only about the protection of individual freedom. The ideas brought forth to secure individual freedom equally called to life a “statist, nationalist repression, administered society, [and] a disseminated subject”<sup>105</sup>. Similarly, Andreas Behnke introduces Kant’s *Perpetual Peace* as the death of the political, because the tranquillity it seeks is not of this world: It is transcendental. Life, Behnke continues, means conflict and antagonism. It means difference. In contrast to this, *Perpetual Peace* seeks a teleological progression to perfection unified in reason and peace. Yet, a peace based on this unifying vision necessarily has to become involved in a process of “ontological eradication of Difference and the operation of an ethno- and tempocentric epistemology”<sup>106</sup>. A new<sup>107</sup> hierarchy of humankind is introduced, with the European subject being at the top.<sup>108</sup>

Haphram and Behnke point toward two aspects of violence not mentioned in the liberal interpretation of history. The first looks at aspects of violence within the state-making process. The second lies in the way non-European cultures have been treated during the time of colonisation and beyond. As to the first, Charles Tilly offers an insightful introduction by pointing out the different levels and grades of violence used by those in power in the process of state formation. This process, Tilly argues, started long before ideas of a modern state were brought into being. Thus, “every European government before the French Revolution relied on indirect rule via local magnates”<sup>109</sup>. Additionally, they allied with pirates, bandits and local power holders. An alliance, which blurred the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate violence, or rather, which regarded ‘legitimate’ as anything assisting those in power. Later then, power was monopolised by eliminating potential local rivals and creating police forces, following

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<sup>105</sup> Harpham, 1994, p. 532

<sup>106</sup> Behnke, 2008. p. 513

<sup>107</sup> The hierarchy introduced by the Enlightenment is *new*, as every empire – Greek, Roman, Ottoman, Russian, and so on – has claimed to hold superior values or ways of living to the rest of humankind in order to justify its power. The main difference between liberal imperialism and the rule of ancient empires lies in the formers attempt at unification by the creation of one national subject, one nation, one religion, one way of living, etc. (See: Münkler, 2005)

<sup>108</sup> See: Behnke, 2008, pp. 514 & 525-56; Harpham, 1994, pp. 532-539

<sup>109</sup> Tilly, 1985, p. 174

the order of the government. The state-making process is hence not as noble as often portrayed, as the state's purpose was not necessarily to bring peace to its population. Rather, it was the result of a long process of pacification and co-optation, through which potential rivals to the sovereign were eliminated, and the latter's power, operating closely with the private economy and profiting from its trading business, was fortified.<sup>110</sup>

Accordingly, Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey argue that the liberal democracy is not, as often portrayed, a natural and timeless political formation. The liberal democracy is a product of industrialisation and the civic revolutions connected to the Enlightenment. With it, the newly evolved bourgeoisie and middle classes sought to institutionalise the protection of their economic advantage, concentrating around private property. The liberal democracy hence always entails a vertical differentiation along class lines, which delegitimises other forms of democratic organisation. Equally, Crawford Brough Macpherson calls the liberal democracy as a system of power, as it institutes rules upon the individual aimed at both transferring violence from the private to the public realm and upholding certain (power-)relations between individuals, groups and communities – such as classes. In sum, the violence of the sovereign was not merely instituted by the reason-lead will of the people; it also followed the logic of private interests held by those in power. As industrial power, and the need for resources grew, this logic, then, was imposed on the rest of the world, where early means for peacebuilding practices were tested in the form of counterinsurgency tactics.<sup>111</sup>

Classical counterinsurgency took place within an imperial and state-centric setting. Applied in colonies, it was not confronted with questions of legitimacy or issues of sovereignty. Its aim was to lead the “colonial subject” towards “European levels of cultural enlightenment”<sup>112</sup>. Where this project failed, the ‘colonial subject’ was to be left alone in his “gloriously isolated state of pre-modern savagery”<sup>113</sup>. Colonial warfare, Alex Marshall writes, was hence based on the positivist notion that all humanity is on a path of cultural evolution toward the Enlightenment. However, the tactics of counterinsurgency were often brutal, and not at all in line with the evolutionary process, they pursued. This gap between theory and practice eventually lead to the idea of “peaceful penetration”<sup>114</sup>. Insurgents were no longer to be pacified by violence, but

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<sup>110</sup> See: Tilly, 1985, pp. 169-177

<sup>111</sup> See: Barkawi/Laffey, 1999. pp. 407-409; Macpherson, 1965, pp. 38-45

<sup>112</sup> Marshall, 2010, p. 26

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Marshall, 2010, p. 236

through the building of roads and schools as well as through the provision of medical, economic and governance assistance. Cultural progression was sought via economic wealth. It is this program of peaceful penetration that, according to Marshall, portrays an early form of the liberal peace practice. But even late-colonial practices were by no means peaceful. Still, the so-called savages were introduced as having an “unchanging, primitive, and almost childlike nature”<sup>115</sup>. Their status as politically, socially and culturally mature subjects was, thus, denied. Insurgencies, such as those in British India were often knocked down violently, and exploitation as well as cultural dislocation and, most cruelly, slave trading marked the trail, colonial powers left behind.<sup>116</sup>

Accordingly, Roland Paris argues that peacebuilding is not merely a neutral technique. It is a normative “mission civilisatrice”<sup>117</sup> that globalises and supports the mode of governance implemented in the West. Nevertheless, Paris relativizes the civilising mission of peacebuilding by arguing that, unlike colonial conquests, it does not aim at extracting resources from the countries intervened in. Nevertheless, however different from colonial practices, peacebuilding missions are still but the “latest chapter of the globalisation of the international society”<sup>118</sup> that began with European overseas explorations in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>119</sup> With this, Paris points to an important aspect of history that often gets lost in its telling. History is not, as usually interpreted by social or political scientists, the stringing together of sealed categories, where the period before and after a certain date – such as 1492, 1945, 1989 or 9/11 – cannot be considered as being of the same quality. Continuity is often the more permanent director of the world’s play.<sup>120</sup> Seen this way, the condition and practices of the liberal peace are not only enqueued in historically grown practices of domination and subordination; questions have to be raised as to how they carry them on.

The hierarchy of humankind, for example, slips back into the liberal discourse, when Mandelbaum, compares international relations to a game of chess, in which “some pieces are more valuable than others, with the king having the highest value of all.”<sup>121</sup> In this game, cultural innovation can only take place in the core. With the rise of the West, the periphery is still made to

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<sup>115</sup> Marshall, 2010, p. 238

<sup>116</sup> See: Marshall, 2010, pp. 235-242; Paris, 2002, p. 651

<sup>117</sup> Paris, 2002, p. 637

<sup>118</sup> Paris, 2002 p. 654

<sup>119</sup> See: Paris, 2002, pp. 651-655

<sup>120</sup> See: Duyvesteyn, 2007, pp. 51-52; Gerschenkorn, 1962, p. 195; Richmond, 2007, p. 225

<sup>121</sup> Mandelbaum, 2002, p. 182

import civilisation, as it was during colonial times, when “India [...] supplied new words – *bungalow, maharajah, thug* – and unfamiliar food – curries – to the metropolis”, while England brought it “the English language, modern government and the railroad”<sup>122</sup>. Thankfully, too, this party of chess shields “peaceful, prosperous Europe” from the disorders of “impoverished, chaotic Africa [...] [with] a large body of water”<sup>123, 124</sup>.

Another example of historical continuity is found by looking at Haiti. Ever since its independence from France in 1804, Noam Chomsky argues, it has been subject to breaches of its sovereignty led by the US. Being the first country to free itself from colonisation, Haiti was to pay a bitter price. Not only was it refused recognition by the US until it provided a convenient export destination for the increasing number of freed slaves in 1862; it was also faced with huge indemnity demands by France as punishment for its won independence. Despite its economic damages, international society still regards the imposition of this indemnity as a just measure. So just, in fact, that Jean-Bertrand Aristide was overthrown with the assistance of both France and the US after having asked France for compensation. This intervention was not the first and, according to Chomsky, not the most extreme. This latter title he reserves for the 1915 invasion lead by Wilson in order to pave the floor for US corporations to ‘unselfishly’ and ‘fatherly’ take over the country – as it was written in the New York Times. Interventions continued, such as the plan of USAID and the World Bank to save Haiti from its social and economic horrors through neoliberal reforms at the time Ronald Reagan was in office, or the 2004 peace mission.<sup>125</sup> Yet it is the invasion by Wilson, the political father of the liberal condition, which strikes a chord here. How does the killing of thousands of Haitians – according to a Haitian historian, 15,000 – and the reintroduction of virtual slavery add up to the actions of a peace visionary?

Aside from the bipolar conflict between East and West, the liberal core, thus Barkawi and Laffey conclude, has been fighting another in conflict along the other two cardinal directions. However, the conflict between North and South is not overt. Its language follows a different logic. It is articulated through arguments of justice, law, the necessity of order and moral obligation. It speaks of just wars and responsibilities to protect, but it is nonetheless imperial, and

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<sup>122</sup> Mandelbaum, 2002, p. 61

<sup>123</sup> Mandelbaum, 2002, p. 198

<sup>124</sup> See: Mandelbaum, 2002, pp. 61 & 198

<sup>125</sup> See: Chomsky, 2010, pp. 7-12

has since the end of colonisation never legitimised intervention as much as it does today.<sup>126</sup> It, too, already has a name. It is called liberal imperialism and to it I will now turn.

### 2.2.2 The Path to Empire

Most critiques on the imperial nature of liberalism concern the “unilateral, even domineering actions”<sup>127</sup> of the US. Especially interventionist practices after 9/11 mark a shift in international peacebuilding engagement. According to Richmond, a move can be recognised towards conservative peacebuilding models, which seek to implement liberal policies more aggressively than before.<sup>128</sup> According to Linda Bishai, this has to do with the US seeing the legitimacy of its power threatened. She writes that power, “which loses its legitimacy tends to give way to violence in order to maintain control”<sup>129</sup>. Additionally, she sees the global military dominance of the US as a clear marker of imperialism. Less clear is the characterisation of the ‘US empire’. Unlike European imperialism, the imperialism of the US is often not regarded as destructive and subsuming. The American aim of spreading liberalism across the globe reinvents. That is, cultures and states are drawn into it voluntarily and transformed accordingly. Far from being imperial, the official story goes, what spreads globally is a network that does not coerce affiliation but attracts new members due to its moral and rational superiority. Of course, as Edward Rhodes writes, “[p]eace is a praiseworthy goal. Freedom and human rights are good”<sup>130</sup>. However, much of the legitimacy ascribed to the liberal model is rhetoric. The liberal network does not happen by itself. It is created, among other things, through the military power of the US, which is hegemonic, unilateral, globally applied, and aggressively used. Hence, what might seem to the US as passive enjoyment of the “fruits of a globally desirable model of political freedom and capitalist production”<sup>131</sup> is actually something coercive and violent.<sup>132</sup>

Still, the tendency toward imperialism does not only refer to the present actions of the US-lead Western alliance. It lies, Bishai argues, within liberal theory itself. More specifically, it

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<sup>126</sup> See: Barkawi/Laffey, 1994, p. 418; Richmond, 2007, p. 221. However, the North-South conflict still relies on the use of force. Yet, rather than making use of their own militaries, powerful states became engaged in “raising troops from foreign, client populations” (Barkawi/Laffey, 1994, p. 410). (See: Ibid.)

<sup>127</sup> Bishai, 2004, 48

<sup>128</sup> See: Richmond, 2007, p. 221

<sup>129</sup> Bishai, 2004, p. 62

<sup>130</sup> Rhodes, 2002, p. 138

<sup>131</sup> Bishai, 2004, pp. 50-51

<sup>132</sup> See: Bishai, 2004, pp. 48-62; Rhodes, 2002, pp. 132-139

springs from the wish that a moral certainty is found in individual freedom and equality, which is so fundamentally rational that it cannot but be universally desirable and globally applicable. It is this certainty, without any trace of scepticism that holds the danger of illiberalism and eventually leads to imperialism. This point is important, as it shows that the illiberal and ultimately imperial danger of liberalism does not lay in one single aspect of the liberal peace, it pervades all of it: concept, condition and practice. This fact is very well captured by Jedediah Purdy, who writes,

First, there is one set of principles binding all countries in the world, whether their governments acknowledge or ignore them. These are democracy, free markets, human rights, and peaceful behaviour toward other countries. Second, we embody these principles, and we have the last word as to what they mean and where they have been grievously violated. Third, we will enforce these principles with our unparalleled military strength and will not permit competitors to arise and challenge our supreme position. In us, and only in us, power and righteousness coincide.<sup>133</sup>

Clearly then, then, the liberal project treads the “path to Empire”<sup>134</sup>. The globe is not structured along the political, economic and social lines of liberalism due to a voluntary network, but as a result of power imbalances. In its most benign form, this power manifests in the fact that states do not have any other option than to sign onto the liberal project in order to survive. The American empire might not rest upon territorial conquest and control, but it permeates deep into individuals’ lives, and it does so consciously.<sup>135</sup>

This is made clear by Robert Cooper, who describes the liberal condition as postmodern. To him, the postmodern era is characterised by, first, a diffusion between domestic and foreign issues; second, the refusal to use violent means for dispute resolution; third, an increasing irrelevance of borders; fourth the pursuit of security through transparency; and fifth, the awareness of mutual interdependency and vulnerability. Yet, threats face the free and postmodern world, both from classical modern states – such as China or India –, and from ‘pre-modern’ or ‘failed’ states. Old-fashioned in nature, these illiberal states need other, rougher measures to keep them in check. Especially the “pre-modern chaos”<sup>136</sup> would be best handled by the means of a new colonisation. But, as no state wants to take on such a *responsibility* – it is the regrettable end of colonisation, which in fact brought forth the present chaos in the first place – a new kind of imperialism is called for. The character of this new imperialism, Cooper notes, is twofold. First, it is voluntary and acts via the global economy and its main regulators: the IMF and the World

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<sup>133</sup> Purdy, in: Bishai, 2004, p. 64

<sup>134</sup> Bishai, 2004, p. 54

<sup>135</sup> See: Bishai, 2004, pp. 51-65

<sup>136</sup> Cooper, 2002, p. 2

Bank, both of which assist states who wish to find their way back to the prosperous trail of the global market. Second, it is neighbourly, as military assistance, as well as “police, judges, prison officers, central bankers, and others”<sup>137</sup>, are provided with friendly intentions to a state recovering from ‘failure’. Neighbours organise and monitor elections, just as they train local police forces. As Cooper applies the concept of neighbourhood to the entire world, his vision of a cooperative empire will ultimately have to be global.<sup>138</sup>

Cooper’s article is multi-layered and diffuse. It points toward the superiority of the post-modern condition, while at the same time presenting it as threatened by those who have not yet reached its developmental stage. In other words, arguments of moral authority mix with the analysis of potential threats. Perhaps this diffuseness is due to the need of rhetoric to bridge the paradox liberalism has brought itself into by pursuing liberal moral ends through illiberal means. However diffuse, the ‘fixed price menu’ is nonetheless clear: “Not learning English means giving up certain kinds of ambition. Not adopting liberal trade rules means missing entire streams of the global economy.”<sup>139</sup> Not making the right choices for a people means facing sanctions, if not intervention.

In the following section I will consider different levels, on which the liberal empire is maintained and expanded, without aiming at presenting a full and comprehensive picture. I shall, first, provide insights into global economic and political structures so as to, second, show how they are used to legitimise certain international behaviours, and, third, illustrate how they influence the way peace projects are planned and implemented.

#### 2.2.2.1 The Fixed Price Menu

Many “choices made for war-torn societies” Michael Pugh argues, “serve to maintain wealth imbalances”<sup>140</sup>, as they are. The institutional prioritisation of those, who have attained and safeguard economic power, both intra- and inter-nationally, illustrates another aspect of continuity within the advancement of liberal ideals throughout history. Whereas democracy as such is not an unworthy goal – as liberal democracies do somehow mediate the will of the population – it nonetheless expresses the institutionalised will that private property be protected.

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<sup>137</sup> Cooper, 2002, p. 4

<sup>138</sup> See: Cooper, 2002, pp. 1-4

<sup>139</sup> Bishai, 2004, p. 51

<sup>140</sup> Pugh, 2005, p. 15

Democracies therefore perpetuate both the division of society along class lines, as well as the “capitalist socio-economic order”<sup>141</sup> as such. Liberal spaces, Barkawi and Laffey argue, are created to fortify the international, capitalist power of certain states and groups through geo-strategic, political and economic means – which mostly relinquish the use of direct force. In this context, the Western states can be regarded as *one*

Western state – ‘a massive, institutionally complex and messy agglomeration of state power centred on North America, Western Europe, Japan and Australasia. This [ultra-imperialist military economic order] [...] preceded and made possible the internationalization of capital, the interpretation of the major capitalist economies and processes of transnational class formation’<sup>142, 143</sup>.

Importantly, this interpretation does not separate economic from political concerns. Economic affairs are not, as often presented, a natural and value-free pursuit of *homo economicus*, thought to portray a rationally calculating and inherently capitalistic, entrepreneurial self. Economy is heavily entangled with politics, which channels economic action in a deeply imbalanced way. How then, does peacebuilding fit into this?

As part of the ‘capitalist, socio-economic order’, peacebuilding does not exclusively follow the humanitarian ambition of preventing violence from reoccurring. The liberal peace, Pugh argues, is a “fluid response to the logic of industrial and post-industrial capitalism”<sup>144</sup>; perpetuated by the economic dimension of peacebuilding, i.e. market liberalisation. Measures undertaken as part of the economic dimension of peacebuilding are privatisation and a reduction of – or rather a change in – the state’s role, both of which are to support the quest for private gain. Underlying these measures is the hope that privatisation leads to foreign investment, increased production and export relations.<sup>145</sup> The two most influential actors promoting liberal economic reforms in the context of peacebuilding operations are the World Bank and the IMF<sup>146</sup>. Typically, Mandelbaum writes, reforms follow a conditional loan issued by the IMF. These conditions are often disadvantageous to the population of the loan-receiving country, initiating a phase of

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<sup>141</sup> Barkawi/Laffey, p. 408

<sup>142</sup> Barkawi/Laffey, p. 420

<sup>143</sup> See: Barkawi/Laffey, pp. 408 & 419-420; Pugh, 2005, p. 15

<sup>144</sup> Pugh, 2005, p. 24

<sup>145</sup> See: Pugh, 2005, p. 14

<sup>146</sup> Mandelbaum actually calls the IMF the “Vatican of free-market economies, but more powerful than the Bishop of Rome” (Mandelbaum, 2002, p. 36).

intense and prolonged economic austerity. As a consequence of market liberalisation, public and collective spaces as well as the success rates of local economic initiatives often diminish.<sup>147</sup>

Even the introduction of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) made no change with regards to this matter. In Kosovo, for example, economic reconstruction initiatives have often stated the necessity of social justice, poverty reduction and the enhancement of public services, in order for the national economy to succeed. In 2002-2003, however, the IMF simultaneously advised "curbs on spending, [...] control on wages, social welfare, public sector reforms and compensation for workers thrown out of work by privatisation"<sup>148</sup>. Hence, several problematic issues remain unaddressed by MDGs. First, structural violence,<sup>149</sup> which springs from the so-called 'zone of peace' – the West – and is perpetuated through policies that discriminate against local communities, denying them any options in economic innovation, is continuously ignored. Core capitalist economies do not liberalise their markets; they protect them. Equally, they favour donor goods and foreign expertise over local production and employment. At the same time, they put pressure on foreign economies so as to reduce state welfare. Second, MDGs-inspired programs still think of the poor and those in situations of violent conflict as failing in their entrepreneurial nature. To this failure, then, *one* therapeutic solution is presented, to boost the economy of post-conflict or developing societies, no matter if the society in question resides in East Timor or in Haiti. Last, Pugh argues, that the reduction of public goods still remains "the order of the day"<sup>150</sup> and even programs with emancipatory aims follow the logic of a discourse that favours capitalist interests for the pursuit of a 'good life'. Therefore, Pugh concludes, "economic wisdom resides with the powerful. Political inequality leaves many with no control over the major decisions that affect their lives"<sup>151</sup>. This is not to change soon, as IFIs take an increasingly active role in peace processes.<sup>152</sup>

In sum, it can be argued that the liberal peace, and especially liberal peacebuilding assists in upholding the present 'capitalist socio-economic order', which is founded on inequality. At this point, I would like to stress that this is often done unintentionally. Many professionals active

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<sup>147</sup> See: Mandelbaum, 2002, p. 36; Pugh, 2005, p. 15

<sup>148</sup> Pugh, 2005, p. 16

<sup>149</sup> The phrase 'structural violence' refers to "patterns of relations between the segments of society" (Graf/Kramer/Nicolescu, 2007, p. 132) that uphold an asymmetry of power and violate the fulfilment of basic human needs. Therefore it is very much connected to discrimination and exploitation. (See: Ibid.)

<sup>150</sup> Pugh, 2005, p. 22

<sup>151</sup> Pugh, 2005, p. 25

<sup>152</sup> See: Pugh, 2005, pp. 15-25

in peacebuilding hold commendable goals, and their wish to assist the development or peace process of a society is genuine. Yet, being embedded in the international system as it is today, peacebuilding is subject to a discourse and its politics, both of which serve to legitimise and preserve the existing power and wealth distribution. The necessity of economic liberalisation in the pursuit of economic growth is only one aspect of this discourse, although a quite significant one. However, to put this liberalisation into practice, peace operations need some kind of moral justification. Therefore, one source for legitimisation is found in the concepts of human security and the responsibility to protect (R2P).

#### 2.2.2.2 A Responsibility to Protect?

By placing the safety of the individual at the centre of international security calculations, the concept of human security combines threat analyses with ideas concerning the nature of human beings – as entrepreneurial selves, striving for self-management and self-reliance. This is why, threats are not only thought to be present in violent conflict. Equally, underdevelopment is thought to engender alienation, breakdown, and insurgency. The concept of human security is often presented as stemming from an increased humanism in international relations, and portraying an enlightened way of integrating individual life into international security affairs. The concept of human security is thus “liberal [and] people-centred”<sup>153</sup>. It brings with it a shift in moral considerations concerning interstate relations.<sup>154</sup>

This shift is perhaps most significantly portrayed in the United Nations R2P Report, which was produced by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). It was introduced as a response to the horrors of the mass atrocities committed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Somalia, etc., to which the international community failed to respond. Criticising this failure to act, it argues for a cosmopolitan responsibility to protect every citizen from mass atrocities, genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Thus, R2P does not merely focus on military intervention. It equally stresses the responsibility to *prevent* violent conflict, and *rebuild* states, economies and societies in the conflict’s aftermath.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Duffield, 2007, p 115

<sup>154</sup> See: Duffield, 2007, pp.112-131

<sup>155</sup> It therefore corresponds to the expansion of peacebuilding, which now addresses pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict situations.

Intervention-measures therefore range from “diplomacy, political sanctions and incentives [to] economic sanctions”<sup>156</sup>, etc. Military force is only to be used as a last resort.<sup>157</sup>

According to Mark Duffield and David Chandler, there are several problems with this report. First and foremost, the security at stake in the concepts of human security and R2P is not that of the societies intervened in, but that of the West. America, the U.S. National Security Strategy wrote in 2002, is no longer threatened by conquest, but by states ‘failing’ into chaos and vicious cycles of religious violence. Second, the R2P report aims at a discursive shift in the international debate on intervention. The term humanitarian intervention is dropped in favour of the words *responsibility* and *protection*, which positively connote the use of force with its focus on the safety of the individual. Sovereignty is reframed as the responsibility a state has to protect its citizens. Last, R2P is presented as compatible with the UN, because an intervention based on an ethically sound analysis is not deprived of this morality only because an intervening power acts unilaterally.<sup>158</sup>

The discursive shift is problematic, since it presents the interventionist use of force as morally good, and places the burden of justification regarding human rights’ abuses on the state suspected of neglecting its responsibility to protect its citizens. Consequently, the moral inhibition for Western powers to intervene is at its lowest point since the end of colonisation. This suggests that morality and power do not exclude each other, as powerful actors of the international arena, such as the UN, the US or NATO actively steer the construction of what is considered morally right.<sup>159</sup> Further, in the context of the R2P debate, morality works to the

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<sup>156</sup> Civic, 2010, p, 159

<sup>157</sup> See: Civic, 2010, pp. 155-159

<sup>158</sup> See: Chandler, 2004, pp. 61-76; Richmond, 2007, p. 306

<sup>159</sup> This becomes more evident when considering other attempts at discursive shifts. One of the latter concerns the role of NATO, which after the end of the Cold War actively engaged in reshaping its image and therefore displaying a constructivist approach to politics. Merje Kuus’ article *Love, Peace and NATO: Imperial Subject-Making in Central Europe*, for example, follows NATO’s change of self-representation from a military alliance to a peace movement advocating democracy, freedom and the values of Europe. NATO does this by banalising and glorifying its role, and by culturally increasing its presence so as to remake itself everyday. A connection between increasing possibilities for intervention and the expansion of militarisation via NATO, however, has yet to be researched. (See: Kuus, 2007, pp. 269-270; Rasmussen, 2001, pp. 307)

Another issue coming up, when discussing the relationship between morality and power is that of ‘just war’. As Michael Walzer points out, the theory of just war was originally to serve those in power. In the Middle Ages, it provided a secular middle-ground between Christian arguments of absolute pacifism and the pushing for crusades. Only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after the war in Vietnam, was the concept of just war introduced in order to retain military brutality in the pursuit of a state’s interest. However, the declaration of a war as being just – such as was the case in Kosovo or Afghanistan, and would have been necessary in Rwanda in Walzer’s view – does follow the morality-power interplay. This is for two reasons: First, the way a war is presented, depends on the creation of a narrative. This narrative is selective, often stressing the points in line with a just-war argument, leaving out those that are not.

advantage of those with power, as the intervening states are often immune to the accountability they demand from countries (in danger of) failing. Yet, power does not end here. Once an intervention is requested, it reaches all the way to planning and implementing projects meant to protect, prevent, or rebuild.<sup>160</sup>

### 2.2.2.3 A Word on Planning<sup>161</sup>

Most literature on planning is found within the development discourse. The origins of planning theory, however, lie in the post-World War II euphoria of Western countries. There, the planning of cities, regions and nations was to be based on a scientific, value-free and rational basis, with the ambition to support the modernisation of both economy and politics. Cultural particularities were considered irrelevant. With the beginning of de-colonisation, this style of planning was taken over by both the British and French ex-colonies, with the same ambition to modernise. However, after having been met with increased criticism, the golden years of planning ended in 1968. Planners, it was argued by their critics, were too “technocratic, elitist, centralised, bureaucratic, pseudoscientific, hegemonic”<sup>162</sup> etc. With its top-down and state-centred approach, planning was too “inflexible, unresponsive to the needs of the people and alien to local culture”<sup>163</sup>. It thus hindered social change. Therefore, a new approach was called for that favoured bottom-up and people-centred projects. The goal was to enhance the participation of the local population, to respect the local culture and the needs of disadvantaged or marginalised groups, and to become less technocratic and modern-technology oriented.<sup>164</sup>

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In the war in the former Yugoslavia, for example, many Bosnian women put under the protection of UN soldiers were raped by their protectors, up to 40 times a day. Also, US bombing of the Kosovo intentionally targeted civilian infrastructure – including schools and hospitals – causing for example lasting impairment of health-care. Second, arguments favouring a ‘just’ military intervention – as Walzer would have in the case of Rwanda – might focus too intently on the acute crisis, while neglecting structural factors that abetted its outbreak such as a brutal history of colonisation, the external favouring of a certain group, etc. In other words, by advocating military intervention, the imperialistic tendencies of Western countries and their own influence on the outbreak of a certain crisis are ignored. (See: Ashford/Gottstein, 2000, p. 267; Walzer, 2002, p. 925-937)

<sup>160</sup> See: Chandler, 2004, pp. 61-76; Richmond, 2007, p. 306

<sup>161</sup> Both the presentation of planning theories as well as the examples provided in this subchapter draw on earlier exam papers by the author of this thesis that were submitted in 2012 at the Center for Peace Studies, and at the Institutt for Sosiologi, Statsvitenskap og Samfunnsplanlegging, University of Tromsø. (See: Bänninger, 2012a and Bänninger 2012b)

<sup>162</sup> Bishwapriya, 2005, p. 7

<sup>163</sup> Bishwapriya, 2005, p. 7

<sup>164</sup> See: Bishwapriya, 2005, pp. 4-7; Henkel/Stirrat, 2002, pp. 168-171

However, as Heiko Henkel and Roderick L. Stirrat argue, increased participation of the local population into the process of planning does not often lead to empowerment. Present structures of domination and power are still reproduced, even in bottom-up planning strategies. There are two reasons for this reproduction of power. First, by placing the marginalised, neglected, poor, etc. in the centre, structures of domination are neutralised, while binary opposites such as rich/poor, powerful/powerless, male/female and so forth are perpetuated. Second, empowerment is still framed in terms of the liberal project. What the participatory subject is to be empowered for, is the ability to partake in the

great project of the modern as citizens of the institutions of the modern state; as consumers in the increasingly global market; as responsible patients in the health system; as rational farmers increasing GNP; as participants in the labour market and so on<sup>165</sup>.

Henkel and Stirrat conclude that the currency “in which [...] power is given, is that of the project of modernity”<sup>166 167</sup>.

Not only that, Jonathan Crush argues that the language of development also incorporates the style used by colonising powers. Just like the project of making Africa civilised by forcefully rewriting it into a “civilised, ordered, white, male English landscape”<sup>168</sup>, development holds the power to change old worlds and invent new ones. Its jargon thus depends very much on a specific style – for example that of expertise, crisis, disintegration, etc. –, used to promote, licence or justify some interventionist practices while discrediting others. The jargon of development, Crush concludes, speaks in the language of power. Power decides, which knowledge is to matter in development planning. Just as all Western words are situated in an imperial world, in which the West still “shows the rest of the world the image of its won future”<sup>169 170</sup>.

To take Sri Lanka as an example: On 26 December 2004, the day the tsunami hit, the town of Batticola were involved in an active network of women who were facing the on-going civil war by engaging in both rehabilitation and reconciliation. After the tsunami, this network was restructured in order to address the immediate needs of tsunami-affected families and communities. It organised food-distribution, or assisted widowers who had children, but little

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<sup>165</sup> Henkel/Stirrat, 2002, p. 182

<sup>166</sup> Henkel/Stirrat, 2002, p. 182

<sup>167</sup> See: Henkel/Stirrat, 2002, pp. 170-182; Waston, 2003, p. 398

<sup>168</sup> Crush, 2003, p. 2

<sup>169</sup> Crush, 2003, p.9

<sup>170</sup> See: Crush, 2003, pp. 1-9

knowledge as to how to care for them. This changed the day international relief workers arrived. Local initiatives were disregarded and pushed aside. As a local NGO worker expressed it, the international aid workers were “ex-military and things, and they came with a very rigid agenda, based on administrative elements, toolkits and logistics and their ability to get on the ground quickly and go”<sup>171</sup>. Western expertise, Kristin S. Scharffscher argues, was glorified, while community representatives lost access to humanitarian information. Without much ado, the local network distanced itself from the international intervention, and two worlds emerged. Though the local network of women still existed in 2008, it was weakened and not strengthened by the international relief operation.<sup>172</sup>

A similar example is found in the first DDR programme in Afghanistan, which took place in the period 2003-2005. As said, the UN-led DDR programs have gained widespread acceptance as a component of post-conflict peacebuilding. Its main goal lies in the reintroduction of former combatants into civilian life, through which armed groups are to be dismantled and war is to be prevented from reoccurring. This process, Robert Muggah argues, usually does not happen by itself, but is part of an attempt to secure the “legitimate control of force from above”<sup>173</sup>. In Afghanistan, the DDR program was part of an integrated peace mission. Perhaps this initial position aggravated the implementation of the program. Due to the unwelcome Taliban rule, Afghanistan was declared a failed state. The Taliban were not recognised as legitimate conflict party, and their collapse was declared as year zero, starting from which the society, politics and economy of the country could be built anew.<sup>174</sup> In this context, the first DDR program in Afghanistan was intended to promote the “surrender of weapons, sever links between AMF<sup>175</sup> commanders and combatants, and reintegrate ex-fighters into meaningful employment or a newly reconstituted security sector”<sup>176</sup>. The program was limited to the Taliban-opposed Northern Alliance and held special offers for local commanders who could legalise their *de facto* power by being integrated into the military or by attaining government positions. In all three aspects of the program – that is, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration – problems were

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<sup>171</sup> In: Scharffscher, 2011, p. 71

<sup>172</sup> See: Scharffscher, 2011, pp. 63 & 69-77

<sup>173</sup> Muggah, 2008, p. 2

<sup>174</sup> See: Duffield, 2007, pp. 113-157

<sup>175</sup> AMF stands for Afghan Military Forces, the name given to the Afghan army established after the fall of the Taliban regime. The forces were formed mainly through the integration, and hence legalisation, of former Mujahedeen units, and thus reference to the AMF is often used to describe the former Northern Alliance formed against the Taliban. (See: Bhatia/Muggah, 2008, p. 129)

<sup>176</sup> Bhatia/Muggah, 2008, p. 130

found. Yet, according to Antonio Giustozzi, the main failure of the program lies in the insufficient evaluation of both the former combatants themselves and their social and economic background. Working with a standardised profile, combatants were thought of as young, uprooted, unemployed and frustrated males, ignoring the fact that many of them had never left their home, and sometimes even worked part-time despite their fighting activities. The problem of lacking a sound assessment also concerned the mafia-dominated realities of the Afghan market, and the need for social – and not merely economic – security. As a result, many of the former combatants could never really cut their ties from the military units controlled by warlords and local commanders.<sup>177</sup>

### 2.2.3 A First Conclusion: Giving Voice to the Local-Local

The liberal peace, Richmond thus concludes, “has become an intervention in local discussions about peace, often replacing them entirely”<sup>178</sup>. It privileges the Western way of thinking about and making of peace, which is, then, presented as objective and universal. However, as the case of Afghanistan illustrates, this highly standardised approach to peacebuilding often does not match the realities on the ground. It is, as said, like a ‘peace from IKEA’, in which the desired state of affairs can be *assembled the same way* no matter which context it is to be brought to. Problematically, too, the structural design for peace comes from a position of power. Only certain – third – parties are in the position to know, define and export peace to the ignorant who still live in a state of war. “Both acts of defining and constructing peace”, Richmond concludes, “are therefore hegemonic acts”<sup>179</sup>. Concealed behind the rhetoric of economic prosperity, morality, and right, they create “subtle forms of colonisation, interventionism and local depoliticisation”<sup>180</sup>. It acts in the service of those in power, and simultaneously recreates orientalist notions such as ‘us and them’ or the other as past enemy and future ideal.<sup>181</sup>

Importantly, as has been shown above, the hegemonic, imperial or even colonial trend, of the liberal peace is not a result of a deformation of the otherwise pure and morally good liberal condition. It springs right from the liberal core, as the latter strives for the perpetuation of its

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<sup>177</sup> See: Bhatia/Muggah, 2008, pp. 127, 130-132 & 140-146; Giustozzi, 2008, pp.172-175

<sup>178</sup> Richmond, 2009, p. 567

<sup>179</sup> Richmond, 2006, p. 307; See: Richmond, 2006, pp. 295-310

<sup>180</sup> Richmond, 2009, p. 565

<sup>181</sup> See: Heathershaw, 2008, p. 603

economic wealth and political power. According to Richmond, the international community is not only complicit in the problem of starvation, but also perpetuates the current state of peace, and especially war. Again, I want to stress that “few peacebuilders are cynics and few would see themselves as representatives [...] of an imperial power”<sup>182</sup>.<sup>183</sup> However, being agents within the current international system, the peace peacebuilders strive for, cannot take hold on the ground. It remains, Richmond argues, superficial; a phantasm that is planted into a “soil without water, dependent on foreign resources and subject to uncertainty about the longevity of external commitment”<sup>184</sup>. The peace built, remains virtual, and by declaring itself as virtuous, by attempting to spread the light of peace, it equally feeds the shades of war. Liberal peace, Richmond argues, always carries a trace of violence, just as violence always holds a seed of peace. Hence, “as peace spreads, it collapses. Peace becomes war and war becomes peace”<sup>185</sup>.<sup>186</sup>

There is, Richmond writes, only one way out of this problem. It leads to the deeper-than-local, to the “local-local”<sup>187</sup>. There, peacebuilders can learn to give voice to the other. They can learn to care for and relate to the recipients of peacebuilding on an everyday level, where human beings meet each other as human beings. Empathy, respect, and recognition mark this new approach, and space is to be given to local ownership, self-government, and self-determination. Yet, Richmond does not fully break with the liberal tradition. He proposes a “liberal-local hybrid”<sup>188</sup> between the liberal peacebuilders and the recipient individuals, communities or social movements. This hybrid is to lead toward a post-liberal peace characterised by reconciliation, which takes into account the importance of the everyday.<sup>189</sup>

However, this “knowledge of the local”<sup>190</sup> is not a recently discovered focus. As was shown in the chapter on planning, local emancipation and empowerment in the form of bottom-up planning has been discussed ever since the 1970s. Nevertheless, peacebuilding practices have

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<sup>182</sup> Heathershaw, 2008, p. 603

<sup>183</sup> However, as Richmond points out, there are also those who are mainly concerned about their next posting and what this posting means to their career. In Dili, East Timor, and Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo, the peacebuilding personnel lives in high standard-housing behind fences and within fortresses, while the local population lives not only separate from them, but also in great poverty. Additionally, Richmond states that even though “much has been achieved in conflict zones by the agents of the peacebuilding consensus” (Richmond, 2007, p. 228) this achievement is not really significant as it has been measured by the peacebuilders’ own frameworks and standards. (See: Richmond, 2007, pp. 204-205 & 228)

<sup>184</sup> Richmond, 2007, p. 205

<sup>185</sup> Richmond, 2007, p. 227

<sup>186</sup> See: Richmond, 2007, pp. 226-227

<sup>187</sup> Richmond, 2009, p. 566

<sup>188</sup> Richmond, 2009, p. 577

<sup>189</sup> See: Richmond, 2009, pp. 565-577

<sup>190</sup> Call/Cousens, 2008, p. 14

not been able to escape their own problematic history. In fact, it could be asked whether this new focus on the local-local – the ‘real’ local, so to speak – is not partaking in the construction of a new category, under which the people affected by violent conflict are, once again, placed by someone else. As Hirblinger and Simons note, the “local is nothing *out there* but is partly constituted as an object of knowledge”<sup>191</sup>, which homogenizes and essentialises highly complex and dynamic social environments. Further, the category of the true local is by no means value-free. Rather, it functions as selective aid in distinguishing the ‘good local’ – because true – from the ‘bad local’ already infiltrated by liberal practices. In other words, the notion of the ‘local-local’ produces yet another binary distinction between the pure and authentic, *indigenous* local, and the dominating, *Western* liberal. The latest critique on the liberal peace fails in its chance to reintroduce a long lost common ground: our humanity.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, it is questionable whether a post-liberal, liberal-local hybrid will succeed in evading the present structure of power, domination, imperialism and at times neo-colonialism. As Richmond asked two years before he introduced his ideas on a post-liberal peace, “[h]ow does one emancipate without dominating, without ignoring difference, without knowing the mind of the other?”<sup>193</sup>

How, indeed? There is a voice that might have an answer. A voice largely ignored in the current discourse on peace. A voice that invites us to go beyond, or before, the original contract, through which reason gives power to institutions, before peace is handed over to politics, law, and the economy. This voice argues that the history of peace, involving institutions called forth merely by truth and reason,

does not recognise itself in the millennia of fratricidal, political and bloody struggles of imperialism, of human hatred and exploitation, up to our century of world wars, genocide, the Holocaust, and terrorism; of unemployment, the continuing poverty of the Third world, of the pitiless doctrines and cruelties of fascism and National Socialism, up to the supreme paradox where the defence of the human and its rights is inverted into Stalinism.<sup>194</sup>

The liberal peace is blind to its own violent ways and detours, as it has forgotten something essential: before the world can be possessed, before it can be understood and judged, it is given. Before becoming an issue of politics, law or the economy, peace is found in touch, in proximity, in the neighbour, and the responsibility I have for him. It is peace that makes the world arise, and meaning unfold. According to this voice, the voice of Lévinas, peace will thus not be found by

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<sup>191</sup> Hirblinger/Simons, 2014, p. 3

<sup>192</sup> See: Hirblinger/Simons, 2014, pp. 1-8

<sup>193</sup> Richmond, 2007, p. 203

<sup>194</sup> Lévinas, 1996, p.163

critically reflecting on the failure of our powers of knowledge, hoping to ever improve political and institutional approaches to a peaceful society. On the contrary, Lévinas invites or rather forces us to a form of criticism invoked by guilt with regards to the very basic assumptions we hold, about what it means to live in this world as a human being or, more exactly, as a subject. Only within this latter critique can one gain a sense of what peace really is – just to then lose it again as soon as it enters the realm of our understanding. Lévinas calls for a critical movement leading us beyond our very condition, to where the possibility of knowledge arises.<sup>195</sup> It is to Lévinas, and the answer he received from Derrida, I shall now turn.

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<sup>195</sup> Lévinas, TI, p. 113-117

### 3 Lévinas and Derrida – Irreducible Relations and Open Roads

“God is therefore implicated in war.”<sup>196</sup> This sentence is perhaps the ‘peaking nexus’ at which the philosophical approaches of Lévinas and Derrida meet. Ultimately, their dialogue oscillates between a desire for purity, and a pragmatic acknowledgement that such purity might never be reached. What does this mean, then, when it comes to peace? In the present chapter, this question shall lead me, first, through the thought of Lévinas, and, second, through that of Derrida, so as to finally end in a critical approximation of the two.

#### 3.1 Lévinas – A Peace Beyond the I

But over the hands that have touched things, places, trampled by beings, the things, the context in which those fragments enter, the inflexions of the voice and the words that are articulated in them, the ever sensible signs of language, the letters traced, the vestiges, the relics – over all things, beginning with the human face and skin, tenderness spreads.<sup>197</sup>

Body before reason, sense and experience before thought, touch before sight, language as speech before language as thought, ethics before truth, and the Other before the Same<sup>198</sup>: this is Lévinas’ legacy to Western thought. A legacy that, “[I]ike a battering-ram”<sup>199</sup>, attempts to break through Western tradition’s very core by initiating a fundamental re-evaluation of concepts such as truth, thought, reason, knowledge,<sup>200</sup> language, the subject and its freedom, etc. Yet, Lévinas’ concern does not merely reside in epistemological matters. In connection with epistemology, he equally

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<sup>196</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 107

<sup>197</sup> Lévinas, 1987, p. 119

<sup>198</sup> In Lévinas approach the ‘same’ is used to illustrate a specific approach to identity and egoity. It describes an ego that is unaware of otherness and thus assimilates everything it meets to itself – that is, every other being is made part of the ego’s identity and becomes the ‘same’. As Lévinas writes, it “is because I am from the first the same – *me ipse*, an ipseity – that I can identify every object, every character trait, and every being” (Lévinas, 1986, p. 345). Whether the equation of identity and ipseity is justifiable, is not to be discussed here. (For an interesting comment on this, however, see: Derrida, 1978, pp. 109-110) When using the word ‘same’ in this sense, I shall write it with a capital S in order to avoid confusion with regard to the structure of the sentence in which the word is used. I am aware that in other literature, this is not usually done so.

<sup>199</sup> Lévinas, 1987, p. 122

<sup>200</sup> In this thesis I will not elaborate in detail the differences and connections between concepts such as truth, knowledge, rationality, understanding, reason, etc. For the purposes of this thesis it suffices to understand that these concepts are very closely linked and relate to a wish, Western philosophy often holds that objective, and true knowledge can be found via the use of reason. Understanding, then, would have to be a process closely following rational principles.

asks for a new understanding of the social, and the institutions necessary to organise society in a peaceful manner. According to Lévinas, peace is not about my having a comfortable life. As long as there is an Other who is potentially exposed to suffering, there is no home for me in this world. Without return, I am for the Other. Forgetting this means being blind to the origin of the world, as we see it. It is, Lévinas argues, equivalent to giving in to violence, egoism, and imperialism. In the following three subchapters I will trace Lévinas' argument by introducing, first, his criticism of Western philosophy; second, the ensuing inversion – or “displacement”<sup>201</sup> – of its classical binary concepts; and third, my being ordered to infinite responsibility by the Other as a consequence of this inversion.

### 3.1.1 The Violence of Universality

Ever since Aristotle, Lévinas argues, occidental philosophy has founded itself within Being. Ontology was regarded as the first philosophy.<sup>202</sup> With its focus on Being and beings, it favours an approach to knowledge and theory that mediates understanding via a third, general, and hence neutral term – be it a concept, a sensation, or Being itself. This term identifies particular beings and unifies diversity. The problem here is that the term used is taken from within the Same. By being understood, a particular singular being is hence submitted to the Same. It loses its otherness, and thus its singularity. This is not to be thought of as some deliberate, vicious act of domination. It is merely the basic form of judgement in which something particular is placed under a more general term, in order to capture its essential character.<sup>203</sup>

Said otherwise, when I relate to the world, things appear to me. Yet this is already a working of my mind, which judges that which appears to me as being something, a thing. My mind unifies a certain whooshing sound, the colours green and brown, a roughness on my hand, etc. under a concept: tree. It also understands a tightening sensation in my chest, heat, a pounding heart, breathlessness, etc. as belonging to a given feeling: fear. The things that appear – my experiences – are taken to make sense within a net of meaning thrown onto the world by none other than myself. I do not perceive the world, I do not experience it; I understand it. “Being is

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<sup>201</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 88

<sup>202</sup> The title ‘first philosophy’ goes to the philosophical discipline, on which any other philosophical consideration is thought to have to base itself.

<sup>203</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 42-46; Lévinas, 1987, p. 110

manifested with a theme.”<sup>204</sup> In its arising it is already always understood as something. In fact, it arises because it is understood. By being thematised, Lévinas argues, Being – the world, as we see it – is created. “Ontology as first philosophy”<sup>205</sup>, is an *egology*. The things that arise have to adapt to *me*.<sup>206</sup>

This scenario grants reason the privilege of being primary to all else. In its light things appear as if without origin, as if their origin lay in reason itself. Consequently, objectivity – the subsumption of diversity under a general concept provided by the Same – seems necessary in order for the subject to be able to relate to another being. Relation comes second to judgement. With regards to things, this has, as mentioned, the effect of assimilating something other to the Same. In the context of a relation with another human being, however, the priority of reason degrades communication to a mere effect of thought, to a “subsidiary function”<sup>207</sup> of the judging mind. Understood this way, language does not gain its meaning from speech, from the fact that something is said to someone. Rather, language “belongs to the very work of truth”<sup>208</sup>. It is “kerygmatic”<sup>209</sup>. The world is first proclaimed by me; and by being so it is taken.<sup>210</sup>

As a consequence, freedom is being understood as the subject’s being in a world without obstacles. In the realm of Being, the understanding subject is free. There is no otherness to stand in its way, nothing that cannot be grasped, and no place on Earth that withstands assimilation. Such an interpretation of freedom, Lévinas argues, serves to secure a “permanence in the [S]ame”<sup>211</sup>. He writes,

That reason in the last analysis would be the manifestation of a freedom, neutralizing the other and encompassing him, can come as no surprise once it was laid down that sovereign reason knows only itself, that nothing other limits it. The neutralization of the other who becomes a theme or an object – appearing, that is, taking its place in the light – is precisely his reduction to the [S]ame. To know ontologically is to surprise in an existent [i.e. a particular being] [...] that by which it is not this existent, this stranger, that by which it is somehow betrayed, surrenders, is given in the horizon in which it loses itself and appears, lays itself open to grasp, becomes a concept<sup>212, 213</sup>.

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<sup>204</sup> Lévinas, 1987, p. 109

<sup>205</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 46

<sup>206</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 42-44; Lévinas, 1987, pp. 109-114

<sup>207</sup> Lévinas, 1987, p. 109

<sup>208</sup> Lévinas, 1987, p. 115

<sup>209</sup> Lévinas, 1987, p. 112

<sup>210</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 43-44 & 90; Lévinas, 1987, pp. 109-115; Lévinas, 1998, p. 29

<sup>211</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 42

<sup>212</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 43-44

<sup>213</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, p. 42-45; Lévinas, 1998, p. 28

In sum, declaring ontology as first philosophy takes the most fundamental mode of being in the world to be the one that secures the primacy of the Same. Its heirs are the Greek, and, like in the tale of Odysseus, it always allows the Same to return home. As can be seen in the quote above, this ‘permanence in the same’ is upheld by an alliance between the Same and some sort of totality, which gathers singularities under a more general term.<sup>214</sup>

This alliance has a purpose. By taking Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology as an example, Lévinas describes true knowledge as concerned with the original presence of beings. A presence that is thought to be found either in their “identity as beings”<sup>215</sup>, or in their Being. In this difference with regards to the original presence of beings, however, lies a deep unease that follows philosophy almost from its very beginning. It signifies that, by becoming phenomena – by appearing in the frame of a theme – beings might arise separately from their Being, and reason might thus not reach that which actually exists outside itself. There is a danger that Being as such is never reached. Misapprehension – the failure to grasp another being – is thus a constant threat of rationality.<sup>216</sup>

To find ease in spite of this threat, and to legitimise rationality, despite its failures and its relativity, occidental philosophy had to come up with something greater than the subjective mind: a reason not bound to a particular person. Hegel called it ‘impersonal reason’. Impersonal insofar as personhood was only gained by an individual who let her reason become universal. Within such an approach, individual thought does not matter. Everything converges to become part of one single totality. This manifests itself materially in one objective historical stream, in which the individual is known only externally, by the dates of its birth and death. Individual freedom is then only a “reflection of an universal order which maintains itself and justifies itself all by itself”<sup>217</sup>. Reference to impersonal reason, Lévinas argues, is always given when the Same does not hold its ground vis-à-vis another being. When confronted with its own failure, reason flees to the totality of a higher generality, which substitutes “ideas for persons [...] [and] [e]xistents are reduced to the neuter state of the idea, Being, the concept”<sup>218</sup>. Lévinas thus suggests that, even if the universality of impersonal reason subsumes individuality, it is still working to the advantage of

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<sup>214</sup> See: Lévinas, 1986, p. 348

<sup>215</sup> Lévinas, 1998, p. 15

<sup>216</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 85-93; Lévinas, 1998, p. 15

<sup>217</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 87

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

the Same, as it follows the latter's movement of finding legitimation via a generalising totality.<sup>219</sup>

It is the alliance with the universal that introduces the problem of violence into the realm of the Same. Violence, Lévinas writes, is

any action in which one acts as if one were alone to act; as if the rest of the universe were there only to *receive* the action; violence is consequently also any action which we endure without at every point collaborating in it<sup>220</sup>.

The first part of Lévinas' definition refers to the violent working of a subjective mind not yet aware of its own limitations. This mind is acting 'as if it were alone', by using its light to grasp, assimilate and possess things. The first part of the definition addresses my violence toward other beings. It thus seems only logical and fair to equally condemn as violent any harm done to me. Yet, to Lévinas, the primary problem of my violation does not lie in the limitation of my latitude through another singular being. By adding the second part of the definition, Lévinas does not intend to leave or somehow modify the dominion of the Same. He wants to stress the danger of any order in which the individual is counted less than the totality by which it is held – even though this order was instituted so as to secure 'permanence in the Same'. This is the case, when personhood is gained only in reference to universal reason; when an individual life is only considered of importance due to the fact that it takes part in the objective stream of history; and when individuality is subjected to a social, economic and political order through which individual action is steered and controlled.<sup>221</sup>

To conclude, violence accompanies both stages of the Same: that of subjective, yet uncritical, and that of impersonal reason. It permeates the entire realm of Being, as it is inherently part of an approach to the world in which singular beings gain relevance only as part of a higher generality. This can be a term; but it can also be the idea of impersonal reason, or the state. Hence, it could be said that, to Lévinas, the form of judgement and the order of the state are of the same violent structure, which strips individuals of their uniqueness by placing them under a greater *totality*. It is for this reason that he considers the degeneration of political power into forms of violence such as National Socialism, Stalinism, or even the starvation of the poor not as a radical break with truth and reason, but as their continuation. By approaching the world via the structure of totality, the realm of the Same becomes expansionist. It will not stop, as Behnke wrote, until all otherness has been made part of the Same; until every thing's final arrival in one

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<sup>219</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 21-22, 47, 55-60, 72 & 87-88; Lévinas, 1987, pp. 113-115

<sup>220</sup> Lévinas, 1990, p. 6

<sup>221</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 21-25, 44-47, 55-60, 72 & 87-88

single and universal totality is reached. The realm of the Same is imperialistic. The primacy of reason introduces the danger of totalitarianism. “Ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power.”<sup>222</sup> However, as shall be seen, according to Lévinas, it is also blind.

### 3.1.2 At Home with the Same

Unlike occidental philosophy proclaims, reason is not the primary characteristic of the ‘I’. According to Lévinas, I am first of all a body. Being so, I am separate, yet not independent. I have needs and live from things that lie outside myself. In this constellation I find pleasure and happiness. The fact that I have needs does not refrain me from being my own master and, in fact, master over the things from which I live – as, by being consumed, they become part of me. Despite my having needs, I am happy. Life is lovable. The misery of poverty and hunger are not inherently part of this constellation. They are only so because of a badly organised society.<sup>223</sup>

The ability to experience pleasure, Lévinas writes, refers to something that cannot be captured by universal history, which only deals with the date of my birth and death as well as my output in the time between those two events. This something is the dimension of interiority or psychism found in a being that sustains its own existence, and is thus no longer a participant in the totality of Being. It is atheist, in the sense that it is not part of God – i.e. of something that is infinitely and absolutely one. Separate, it places itself into the world “as the [S]ame and as I”<sup>224</sup>. It is at home. It does not need any justification for its doing. It is spontaneously free. In sum, I do not primarily participate in universality. I am not originally reason. As body, I initially break with totality and become unique, singular. Yet, by being so, I am lonely and my future is insecure. How can I know, whether my needs are going to be fulfilled tomorrow? Pleasure – the fulfilment of needs – is not simply given; it has to be worked for. This, Lévinas argues, is done by labour, which allows me to transform the world into property and, ultimately, postpone my own death. The property gained – that is, the world grasped – I store at my house, which functions as the extension of interiority. Thus, the “first movement of economy [in its etymological sense] is [...] egoist”<sup>225 226</sup>.

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<sup>222</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 46

<sup>223</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 110-117 & 163-168

<sup>224</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 58

<sup>225</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 157

<sup>226</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 90, 115-117, 142-151, 156-159 & 163

Nonetheless, this movement as such is not judged negatively by Lévinas, as any will could not be constituted without a separate individual concerned about her own survival. Were it otherwise, were the will springing forth from an impersonal, universal thinking – that is, from a totality comprising Being, and hence unconcerned about its own survival – how would this thinking learn to want? Why would it act? Were there no initial corporal separation, which led to economy and hence egoism, there would be no possibility of change, becoming, or time. As the latter do take place, human reason cannot exist outside a physical body. Without a separate, incarnated subject there would be neither the need, nor a search for truth. There would only be Being. Truth needs the ‘I’. At the same time my body needs intentionality, in order to plan my own sustenance. Therefore, neither the separation of rationality and corporeity nor the hierarchical primacy of reason can be justified. Reason, Lévinas concludes, is always incarnated and subjective.<sup>227</sup>

Moreover, the fact that I am first of all a body implies that I perceive or experience beings before understanding them. As described above, understanding something as ‘a tree’ involves seeing colours, hearing certain sounds, smelling, touching etc. My senses are directly affected by the beings outside myself. It is only when the felt is separated from the feeling via a third general term that consciousness arises. Experience thus does not presuppose thought. It is the reverse.<sup>228</sup> By being a body, I am first touched by things. I am close to beings in a way that does not strip them of their otherness.<sup>229</sup> As Lévinas writes,

before turning into a cognition of the outsides of things, and during this very cognition, touch is pure approach and a proximity that is not reducible to the experience of proximity. [...] The visible caresses the eye. One sees and one hears like one touches. The proximity of things is poetry; in themselves the things are revealed before being approached.<sup>230</sup>

The befalling of touch is thus the only possibility for me to be close to other beings, precisely because I am separate from them. Touch allows for a relationship in which both I and the other

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<sup>227</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 165-174

<sup>228</sup> One could say that this is also argued by Kant, as he writes that time-wise the senses come before the understanding. (See: Kant, 1965, p. B1) Yet, Lévinas does not wish to make a temporary distinction, with regards to the primacy of the senses or the understanding. The question of primacy does not concern the time, in which either senses or the understanding are used in the process of cognition. Rather, he wishes to question the primary importance of the understanding, when opposed to the senses, saying that the senses might offer a proximity to things, the mind can never achieve. The senses are therefore misjudged when regarded as necessary, but lesser ability in the process of gaining true knowledge.

<sup>229</sup> See: Lévinas, 1987, pp. 115-121

<sup>230</sup> Lévinas, 1987, p. 118

being are left alone. In our relating to one another, we are not placed under a totality that comprises and judges the relation we hold. We remain absolute.<sup>231</sup>

Yet, there is an anachronism between beings and their being understood, because the thought of something is never that particular something. To the latter, the former is always already past. Thus, as the fact of being cognised is not actually present in cognition itself, insecurity is, again, an inevitable consequence of understanding. By following the structure of judgement, the cognition of something as something “does not understand the object, but its meaning”<sup>232</sup> The origin of phenomena is thus part of another principle than that of the mind. The phenomenal world cannot reach its past. Accordingly, I myself can never know whether alleging things about the phenomenal world – the world that appears to me – is true or false.<sup>233</sup>

Despite being a necessary condition in the search for truth, separation thence also calls into life the constant possibility of misapprehension. Descartes’ fear of a “malicious demon”<sup>234</sup> that meddles with the appearing phenomena,<sup>235</sup> cannot be escaped, despite the evidence of the cogito. To a limited mind – as is the incarnated human mind– scepticism is not a method; it is an ever-present, lurking threat. The “universality of theoretical reason, which arose early in the ‘Know thyself’ in order to seek the entire universe in self-consciousness”<sup>236</sup> has to be broken with. If done so, it might become even clearer that every thought about the world is, in fact, an appointing, a proclaiming, and hence a saying it. Cognition at its core is kerygmatic. However, thought as kerygma suggests there is someone receiving the kerygmatic proclamation. The saying is a *presentation* of the world, as I see it, to someone else. It is a *present*, an offering, leaving it up to somebody else to decide, or judge, whether my proclamation is a correct representation of the world. Anything said about the world thus has to be thought of as question I pose, and which only someone other can affirm. The sting of scepticism cannot be taken away but by the Other’s act of saying yes to the world presented. Truth does not commence in thought. It begins in the spoken word.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, p. 64

<sup>232</sup> Lévinas, 1987, p. 110

<sup>233</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, p. 64-65; Lévinas, 1987, p. 119-120

<sup>234</sup> Descartes, 1986, p. 15

<sup>235</sup> See: Descartes, 1986, p. 15

<sup>236</sup> Lévinas, 1996, p. 163

<sup>237</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 47-48, 61-69, 85-86 & 90-100; Lévinas, 1987, pp. 112-116

Prior to all “understanding or misunderstanding”<sup>238</sup> there is speech, language as communication, in which two absolute beings – in the sense that they are not participating “in a transparent universality”<sup>239</sup> – share their view on the world without knowing each other’s thoughts. Truth does not lie dormant, only to be awoken by a subjective mind’s elevation to universality. It is a bargain between the Other and me. The relation from which it springs is not participative but plural. It is a face-to-face encounter in which both interlocutors retain their freedom to answer in an unexpected way. Rather than being impersonal, thinking is essentially interpersonal. It is a social incident, and evolves where two singularities are *in touch*.<sup>240</sup> “[T]he locus of truth”, Lévinas thus concludes, “is society”<sup>241</sup>.<sup>242</sup> Universality, in this case does not support my “joyous possession of the world”<sup>243</sup>. Rather, objectivity – as interpersonally bargained truth – is gained by giving, which is to say by the abolishment of private property.

### 3.1.3 My Life for the Other

The Other is of course also placed in a particular social or cultural context. He does have a role that can be conceived. Perhaps the Other is the postman delivering my mail, a nanny, a teacher, a bank robber, a warlord, etc. Yet, within and in spite of this context, the Other is close to me because we *say* things to each other, regardless of what is being *said*. In proximity, the Other is immediately present, without the need for me to give meaning to him.<sup>244</sup> Consequently, he does not take a place within Being. By speaking, he represents (by) himself. He shows his face and thus offers a glimpse of what he is behind his role and outside the realm of the Same. On a far deeper level than confirming the correctness of a specific signifier, the face of the Other hence affirms significance as such, and with it he breaks the disquiet of solipsism.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Lévinas, 1987, p. 121

<sup>239</sup> Lévinas, 1987, p. 115

<sup>240</sup> Derrida calls this the “unthinkable truth of living experience” (Derrida, 1978, p. 90), a “wounding of language” (ibid.), a “rupture of logos [...], which opens speech and then makes possible every logos or every rationalism” (Derrida, 1978, p. 98). (See: Derrida, 1978, pp. 90-98)

<sup>241</sup> Lévinas, 1967, p. 101

<sup>242</sup> See: Lévinas, 1987, pp. 40 -6 72-79, 98-101 & 203-209

<sup>243</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 76

<sup>244</sup> The Other, in Lévinas’ approach, is rather male-dominated (see: chapter 4.1). I shall thus refer to the Other as him, when writing about ‘him’ from Lévinas’ perspective. I am aware however that this might seem a patriarchal style of writing, and that it would be preferable to refer to the Other as ‘her’ so as to include both sexes.

<sup>245</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 194-197; Lévinas, 1981, pp. 5-8; Lévinas, 1986, pp. 351-352; Lévinas, 1987, pp. 115-126

However, because the Other has a meaning of his own, I can never actually grasp who he is. To my mind, he is always already gone. This is why Lévinas writes that the time of the Other is that of an absolutely irrevocable past. If he appears, he does so to disappear, to only leave a trace. There is a mystery connected to him that I will never understand. He seems to come from beyond this world of Being, from a realm over which I have no control. Suddenly, I find my powers of accession put into question. This is quite a radical and Earth-shaking experience for me. I am overwhelmed. At the same time, longing spreads within me. I desire to know, who this being is. This desire is unlike any needs I have ever known. Needs, I have always been able to fulfil. Yet, the desire for the Other is something I am unable to control, and which grows each time I am touched by the Other's presence. Thus, just as there is a temporal anachronism between the Other and me, there is also a spatial asymmetry. The Other, evading, if not questioning, my powers of comprehension, seems to come from above. He is His Holiness, the most high.<sup>246</sup>

It is important to understand, that for me, as a subject, this meeting with the Other takes place outside any "noetico-noematic structure"<sup>247</sup>. I cannot make sense of it, as I can never leave my place and look at our relation from outside of it. Yet, of course there is also a theoretical explanation to this intrusion of the Other that I cannot withstand. Even though the face of the Other evokes within me an idea of who he might be, this idea can never do him justice. He always exceeds "*the idea of the other in me*"<sup>248</sup>. To Lévinas, this is exactly what Descartes describes as the 'idea of infinity'.<sup>249</sup> This idea can never hold infinity as such. Having the idea of infinity is thus like walking toward the infinite, without ever arriving at the desired destination. Thinking the infinite is *infinition* – the evolving of infinity. The desire directed toward the Other takes on the same structure. What is more, according to Lévinas, I desire the Other because he is the only possibility for me to be in touch with what lies beyond Being: the infinite.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 33, 48-52 & 194-199; Lévinas, 1986, pp. 347-359; Lévinas, 1987, pp. 119. Derrida makes an interesting comment on the metaphor of the *most high* and the latter's relation to space. He writes, "[t]his expression [...] tears apart, by the superlative excess, the spatial literality of the metaphor. No matter how high it is, height is always accessible; the most high, however, is higher than height. No addition of more height will ever measure it. It does not belong to space, is not of this world." (Derrida, 1978 p. 93)

<sup>247</sup> Lévinas, 1987, p. 119. Lévinas hereby distances himself from Husserl's phenomenology, which, in Lévinas view, can only approach the Other as an object, as it is not able to move outside the structure of consciousness of .... Within such a structure, however, the otherness of the Other is not respected. (See: Derrida 1978, p. 119)

<sup>248</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 50

<sup>249</sup> See: Descartes, 1986, pp. 28-36. In Descartes' case, the idea of infinity is called the idea of God. Lévinas however takes over Descartes' argument that God exceeds the idea of Him in me, as he is *infinite*.

<sup>250</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 48-52 & 194-201; Lévinas, 1986, pp. 350-359; Lévinas, 1987, pp. 119; With this structure, Lévinas places himself between a philosophy of transcendence and one of immanence, both of which focus on the disappearance of the separate and the singular, either within God, or within the totality of history or Being.

In short, when the Other shows himself in the phenomenal world, I am touched by his face in a particular way. On the one hand, the face of the Other ends the loneliness of inner thought and relieves me from solipsism. On the other hand, the face of the Other forces me to see my own limitations with regards to proclaiming – that is, naming, and thus identifying and possessing – the world. Faced with the Other, I find myself in a situation in which the only way I can retain my untroubled freedom would be to kill him. Accordingly, my attempts at grasping the world are not only unmasked as being false: they are accused of being violent, and my freedom of being deadly. By presenting himself, the Other questions both accuracy and legitimacy – both consciousness and conscience – of the hegemonic ‘permanence in the Same’. Meeting the Other, my subjectivity is transformed. I am no longer subjecting, *naming* or *nominative*, but subjected, *accused* or *accusative* – even in grammatical terms: the face of the Other concerns *me*.<sup>251</sup>

Simultaneously, the face of the Other reminds me of the utmost vulnerability of human existence and the hazards he faces. His face speaks of peril and direst need. Thus, while the Other questions my untroubled freedom, he also begs for my goodness. The face of the Other is both height and nudity, divinity and utmost helplessness. Due to this constellation, the Other demands my *response*, without my response ever being able to take the form of murder. As the Other’s plea reaches me from beyond Being, and hence lies before understanding or intention, goodness is evoked within me long before it is my turn to choose.<sup>252</sup> At the same time, I am not left without any possibility for action – as the placement of my subjectivity under the accusative case might negatively suggest. When I see the perils of the Other, I am ordered to a *responsibility* that no one else can share. That is, instead of taking my freedom away, the Other redirects it. Likewise, my subjectivity is transformed into the wish to never cease to try to ease the suffering of the Other. A life in service of the Other, without hoping to be ever compensated for any commitment or dedication, not even in some kind of afterlife: this is the positive form, subjectivity takes in the face of the Other. The Other is thus the source, from which meaning is not only given to himself, or the world, but also to me and my life as “to-be-for-after-my-death”<sup>253</sup>. This, Lévinas argues, is

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Within Being, within a life of economy (in the etymological sense), the face of the Other represents the evolving of a constant transcendence, never reaching that which it desires.

<sup>251</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 82-84 & 197-199; Lévinas, 1981, pp. 11-15; Lévinas, 1986, p. 353-354

<sup>252</sup> See: Lévinas, 1998, p. 11

<sup>253</sup> Lévinas, 1986, p. 349

not the story of Odysseus and his long journey home, but of Abraham, who left his home to never return. It is not something taught by the Greek, but by the Jewish.<sup>254</sup>

This has great significance, as it implies that proximity beyond thought, and not reason, carries within it the seed for goodness. In fact, it is this constellation of my responsibility for the Other that plants the seed for thought and reason by saying the “first word”<sup>255</sup>. As Lévinas writes,

Before the hunger of men responsibility is measured only ‘objectively’; it is irrecusable. The face opens the primordial discourse whose first word is obligation, which no ‘interiority’ permits avoiding.<sup>256</sup>

Declaring ontology as first philosophy disregards the fact that without this ethical relation between the Other and me, research of Being would not be possible. Prior to ontology, Lévinas concludes, there is ethics. The original state of man is peace, not war.<sup>257</sup>

### 3.1.4 “Peace, Love and Understanding”<sup>258</sup>

Lévinas’ critique of occidental philosophy is thus quite radical. Not only does it suggest an inversion of all the central binary concepts of occidental philosophy, such as reason vs. body, sense vs. cognition, language vs. thought, ethics vs. truth, etc.; it equally argues that the philosophical tradition of the West has *chosen* violence to be the original state of humankind, by setting ontology as first philosophy. War of all against all is only the logical consequence of a state in which a multiplicity of beings are concerned about their own existence – or ‘permanence in the [S]ame’ – and therefore rival each other over a way to control the present, in order to survive. These beings, then, have to be bestowed with reason. They have to be given the capability to transform this rivalry by establishing something greater and more general than themselves – such as the order of the state. In consequence, the peace introduced by the original contract aims at tranquillity and order and assigns every individual its present place. War is no longer needed. Yet, this peace has its origin in truth, not ethics. It follows the logic of the Same. Unsurprisingly, justice is created to ensure *my* freedom and to protect *my* property. The state

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<sup>254</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp.72-77, 84-90, 178 & 197-201; Lévinas, 1986, p. 348

<sup>255</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 42

<sup>256</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 201

<sup>257</sup> Lévinas, 1969, pp. 179-201

<sup>258</sup> The Gaylads, 1996, <http://www.discogs.com/Gaylads-Fire-And-Rain/release/1678561> (last accessed: 20th Feb. 2014)

called forth by the social contract still entails “calculation, mediation and politics”<sup>259</sup>. The peaceful benefits of trade and exchange advertised are merely a continuation of the original state of war. Even in a state of peaceful trade, human “beings remain always assembled, present”<sup>260</sup>, patiently awaiting future benefit and victory. Because self-interests prevail, this peace is unstable. Likewise, the peace created by the unifying power of impersonal reason is alienated, as it places each individual under a totality that inhibits both becoming and difference. The state “awakens the person to a freedom it immediately violates”<sup>261</sup>. In sum, the rational peace of the bourgeois exhibits both egoist and totalising violence. It is a peace of empires, fighting for the Same “on the basis of the Truth”<sup>262 263</sup>.

This shakes Western thinking about peace in its foundations. Lévinas does not merely argue that reason is unable to secure peace in a sustainable manner; he equally accuses rational peace of playing its part in horrors usually dismissed as irrational, and hence alien to the progressing track of truth and peace. Accordingly, violent developments such as fascism or genocide might not actually be the expression of a reason turned insane, but the result of an attempt to do everything needed in order for the ‘permanence in the [S]ame’ to be secured. Violence – especially on a political or social level – occurs in a world that worships the ‘I’ and has forgotten the Other. It occurs in a world turned blind to its origin.

Lévinas contrasts this scenario of a rational peace sliding back into violence, with a peace placed at the heart of a relationship that makes murder impossible, and from which truth has yet to be born. To him, peace has to “respond to a call more urgent than that of truth and initially distinct from the call of truth”<sup>264</sup>. Peace is the foreword to truth. It is the “*surplus* of sociality”<sup>265</sup> that leaves otherness absolute, and the Other close to me in a neighbourly way. Still, the relation between me and the Other does not call for a political peace, but for an ethical one. With the face of the Other presenting itself in its utmost vulnerability and need – that is, basically in its mortality – I am forced to wake up from my egoistic and lonely slumber in order to keep watch over and ease the precarious situation of this other being. Peace, as seen by Lévinas, is *performed* by me, when I infinitely take my place as substitute for the Other’s suffering. It is “the whole

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<sup>259</sup> Lévinas, 1981, p. 4

<sup>260</sup> Lévinas, 1981, p. 5

<sup>261</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 176

<sup>262</sup> Lévinas, 1996, p. 162

<sup>263</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 22, 45-47 & 76; Lévinas, 1981, pp. 4-5

<sup>264</sup> Lévinas, 1996, p. 165

<sup>265</sup> Lévinas, 1996, p. 165

gravity”<sup>266</sup> of goodness, and my undeniable and unavoidable responsibility not to leave the “other alone faced with the mystery of death”<sup>267, 268</sup>. Peace, Lévinas writes, can therefore

not be identified with the end of combats that cease for want of combatants, by the defeat of some and the victory of the others, that is, with cemeteries or future universal empires. Peace must be my peace, in a relation that starts from an I and goes to the other, in desire and goodness, where the I both maintains itself and exists without egoism.<sup>269</sup>

Reason, judgement and truth only become necessary in the face of a third party. The third party interrupts and confuses my relation to and responsibility for the Other. Suddenly, I find myself infinitely responsible for two people. As this is an impossible task – there is no such thing as two infinite responsibilities – I become torn. Which of the two is in more need? What if one poses a threat to the other? I start to ask questions, and thus to weigh and make equal two fates which in reality are incomparable. Importantly, Lévinas thus argues that judgement is needed solely because of my failure to take on an infinite responsibility for more than one person at the same time. “[T]he first question in the interhuman,” Lévinas concludes, “is the question of justice”<sup>270</sup>. Only then do consciousness, reason, and knowledge arise. Likewise, the call for political and legal institutions is merely raised due to the multiplicity of human beings in danger, and not in order to secure my protection or to safeguard my possessions.<sup>271</sup>

This is often forgotten. Being and rationality have a way of cutting the ties to their origin, making believe that they are the sole initiators of meaning, and consequently the only hope for justice and peace. As seen above, this is not so. The bourgeois peace has to be thought of in relation to a peace much older than reason. As Lévinas writes, if

reason lives in language, if the first rationality gleams forth in the opposition of the face to face, if the first intelligible, the first signification, is the infinity of the intelligence that presents itself (that is, speaks to me) in the face, if reason is defined by signification rather than signification being defined by the impersonal structures of reason, if society precedes the apparition of these impersonal structures, if universality reigns as the presence of humanity in the eyes that look at me, if, finally, we recall that this look appeals to my responsibility and consecrates my freedom as responsibility and gift of self – then the pluralism of society could not disappear in the elevation to reason, but would be its condition. It is not the impersonal in me that Reason would establish, but an I myself capable of

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<sup>266</sup> Lévinas, 1996, p. 167

<sup>267</sup> Lévinas, 1996, p. 167

<sup>268</sup> See: Lévinas, 1996, pp. 162-167

<sup>269</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 306

<sup>270</sup> Lévinas, 1996, p. 168

<sup>271</sup> See: Lévinas, 1969, pp. 75-76

society, an I that has arisen in enjoyment as separated, but whose separation would itself be necessary for infinity *to be – for* its infinitude is accomplished as the ‘facing.’<sup>272</sup>

Pluralism – that is, separate individuals actively participating in the structuring of their social constellation –, not unity, would have to be the objective of politics. Only this way, can the Other be protected and the violence springing from the unifying power of judgement be minimised. Equally, there needs to be a constant reminder as to where truth, politics and the law were instituted from. Within this world of Being a wakefulness is needed, in order to never forget that it is the “ethical order of human proximity that gives rise to the order of objectivity, truth and knowledge”<sup>273</sup>, and that political and legal institutions are hence primarily there to protect the lives of others, and not my own.<sup>274</sup> Otherwise, the hegemonic path of the Same, with all its consequences, cannot be evaded. To remind of and remain awake for the Other within the work of truth, to be the wisdom of goodness and performed responsibility, and to keep watch over a social state of giving and pluralism: this, Lévinas concludes, is the task of philosophy.<sup>275</sup> Yet, can philosophy fulfil this task?

### 3.2 Derrida – The Madness of Peace

For me, it is always a question of differential force, of difference as difference of force, of force as *différance* (*différance* is a force *différée-différente*), of the relation between force and form, force and signification, performative force, illocutionary or prelocutionary force, of persuasive and rhetorical force, of affirmation by signature, but also and especially of all the paradoxical situations in which the greatest force and the greatest weakness strangely enough exchange places. And that is the whole history.<sup>276</sup>

Philosophical discourse, Derrida agrees with Lévinas, does primarily move within a thought that is shaped by the Greek. It “would not be possible to philosophize, or to speak philosophically, outside this [the Greek] medium”<sup>277</sup>. Husserl and Martin Heidegger knew of this. Yet, any

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<sup>272</sup> Lévinas, 1969, p. 208-209

<sup>273</sup> Lévinas, 1996, p. 169

<sup>274</sup> Similarly, Lévinas regards human rights as rights of the Other.

<sup>275</sup> See: Lévinas, 1996, pp. 168-169

<sup>276</sup> Derrida, 1990, p. 929

<sup>277</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 81

attempt at approaching their dialogue still has to take place within Greek language and tradition. As Derrida writes,

At the moment when the fundamental conceptual system produced by the Greco-European adventure is in the process of taking over all of humanity, [...] [n]o philosophy could possibly dislodge [...] [it] without first succumbing to [...] [it], or without finally destroying itself as a philosophical language.<sup>278</sup>

This Greek foundation is the stronghold of philosophical thought, the knowledge of which keeps the adventure of philosophy safe – even its plunging into the distress of scepticism, for example. This “knowledge and safety [...] are [...] not in the world: rather, they are the possibility of our language and the nexus of our world”<sup>279</sup>. Lévinas’ thought attempts to shake the heart of this safe-house. From the beginning of his text *Violence and Metaphysics* Derrida thus grants Lévinas the ability to “make us tremble”<sup>280</sup> at the very foundation of the Greek *logos* and to “summon us to depart from the Greek site [...] to move [...] toward an *exhalation*, toward a prophetic speech”<sup>281</sup>. At the same time, and also from the very beginning Derrida points toward the danger of a project that needs to make use of the language it seeks to destroy in the process of destroying it. How can the metaphor of light – and, with it, the primacy and violence of the Same – be broken with in philosophical discourse if “all languages combat within it, *modifying only* the same metaphor and choosing the *best light*”<sup>282</sup>?<sup>283</sup>

The main problem, to Derrida, lies in the fact that Lévinas still remains tied to one central positive discrimination of the Greek/Western Tradition: logocentrism, and its favouring phonetics over scripture. Lévinas merely differentiates between language as thought and language as speech. He does not ask what could be learned from its written form. Derrida, like Lévinas, is sceptical about the importance reason and rationality have gained within Western philosophy. Like Lévinas, he advances his criticism by dismantling long-held assumptions about certain primacies, all of which he regards as being part of a “metaphysics of the presence”<sup>284</sup>. Nevertheless, Derrida and Lévinas do not altogether walk the same path. In fact, by attacking yet

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<sup>278</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 82

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 92

<sup>283</sup> See: Derrida, 1978, pp. 80-83 & 92. Derrida writes: “But will a non-Greek ever succeed in doing what a Greek in this case could not do, except by disguising himself as a Greek, by *speaking* Greek, by feigning to speak Greek in order to get near the king? And since it is a question of killing a speech, will we ever know who is the last victim of this stratagem?” (Derrida, 1978, p. 89)

<sup>284</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 134

another unquestioned primacy – that of phonetics, and everything linked to it – Derrida seems to go further than Lévinas. As we shall see, this difference of view has fundamental implications for the dialogue between them. This becomes perhaps most poignant in Derrida’s text *Violence and Metaphysics*, which can be considered an answer to Lévinas’ early thought peaking in the his work *Totality and Infinity*.

In this chapter I will consider Derrida’s critique of Lévinas, as well as the consequent rehabilitation of Husserl’s phenomenology and Heidegger’s Ontology. However, in order to understand better the depth and border, in and at which Lévinas and Derrida meet in their dialogue, I shall first introduce one of Derrida’s most important offerings to philosophy: *différance*. Last, I will try to frame Derrida’s thinking on peace as a movement between pragmatism and madness, at the very border of sense and impossibility.

### 3.2.1 This Différence with an A<sup>285</sup>

To approach Derrida, I shall begin with a letter: *a*. With this letter, which Derrida infixes into the word *différence* – so that it becomes *différance* – he already announces several of his major concerns, above all of which stands the re-establishment of writing over phonetics. The difference between *différence* and *différance* cannot be heard. It can only be read and written. Therefore, any treatise on *différance* necessarily needs to take a “passage through a written text”<sup>286</sup>. Writing is therefore not a pure translation of phonetics. Rather, for phonetics to be comprehensible, it has to make use of the written system of ‘signs’, including a whole array of non-phonetic ‘signs’, such as space, comma, dot, question or exclamation mark, colon, semicolon, etc. Thus, Derrida puts quotation marks around the word ‘sign’, as he actually thinks it unfit. A sign is usually thought of as present in itself, and signifying by itself. However, both phonetic and non-phonetic ‘signs’ merely make sense if brought forth in difference to one another. This difference is not visible, nor is it comprehensible. Visibility and intelligibility – or more abstractly, the *presence* of a sign – are mere products of this difference. By insinuating the letter *a* into the word *différence* Derrida thus wants to address an order beyond “one of the founding oppositions of philosophy”<sup>287</sup>, differentiating between the sensible and the intelligible.

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<sup>285</sup> See: *Derrida*, 2004, Zeitgeist Films. For the script see: <http://kirbydick.com/derrida/DerridaTRANSCRIPT.doc>

<sup>286</sup> Derrida, 1982, p. 4

<sup>287</sup> Derrida, 1982, p. 4

In writing, this opposition dissolves. By starting with the letter *a*, Derrida at once moves to the heart of the matter,

The order which resists this opposition [visible vs. intelligible], and resists it because it transports it, is announced in a movement of *différance* [...] between two differences or two letters, a *différance* which belongs neither to the voice nor to writing in the usual sense, and which is located [...] between speech and writing, and beyond the tranquil familiarity which links us to one and the other, occasionally reassuring us in our illusion that they are two.<sup>288</sup>

*Différance* is thus a movement or, as Derrida writes elsewhere, a sheaf. Yet this movement cannot be made visible. Visible or intelligible is only that, which presents itself, such as the sign. The movement necessary for this presentation, this becoming present, remains ever hidden. Therefore, *différance* is not a thing. Things appear and become present. Equally, it is neither word, nor concept. It has neither “existence nor essence”<sup>289</sup>. Rather, it is that which opens up the entire world, time and space, existence and essence. The movement of *différance* allows for things to surface, become visible, become present, and, ultimately, be replaced.<sup>290</sup>

I shall try to specify this with an etymological excursion: *différance* is linked to the French verb *différer*, which again stems from the Latin *differre*. *Différer* has two meanings. First, it refers to the “action of putting off until later”<sup>291</sup>. That is, it has a temporising aspect. Second, it also entails the notion of being different from something else. This latter notion, to Derrida, is spatial, as the non-identity of things divides space, and is thus the becoming of space. *Différance* refers to both meanings of the verb *différer*. This is, once more, best explained with the ‘sign’. Usually, the sign is used to describe the thing in itself. Said otherwise, with its becoming present, it puts off the presence of the thing in itself – or any other sign – only for the latter to become present again in the future: this is temporisation. At the same time, to gain meaning – i.e., to be present – the sign has to differentiate itself from every other present thing. It must divide the present into space: this is spacing. Anything appearing in presence is thus an effect of a differentiating movement, responsible for the becoming of time and space. Yet, as Derrida goes on,

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<sup>288</sup> Derrida, 1982, p. 5

<sup>289</sup> Derrida, 1982, p. 6

<sup>290</sup> See: Derrida, 1982, pp. 1-7

<sup>291</sup> Derrida, 1982, p. 8

This does not mean that the *différance* that produces differences is somehow before them, in a simple and unmodified – in-different – present. *Différance* is the non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origin of differences. Thus the name ‘origin’ no longer suits it.<sup>292</sup>

There is no author of *différance*, no subject controlling it.<sup>293</sup> Rather, *différance* is best thought of as play – that is, a nonstrategic but still structured movement – between differences, between effects without a cause. In consequence, the subject, too, is to be thought of merely as an effect of *différance*. Indeed, to Derrida, the (self-)conscious subject is “a ‘function’ of language”<sup>294</sup>. Not only must it conform to a system of language already at play before the subject’s coming into being and claiming speech. The conscious subject also merely becomes comprehensible if opposed to or differentiated from what it is not (unconscious, an object, other, etc.).<sup>295</sup>

We, as beings who approach the world in language thus remain captured by this play. We cannot go beyond it. This entails one major difference between Derrida and Lévinas. While Lévinas regards the face-to-face as (non)place, from which the world can begin by being presented, Derrida concludes that the origin of this world – this ‘irrevocable past’ – cannot be found. In fact, the beginning – the very first placing of something as present – was already an iteration, a repetition, a setting in and of difference. Therefore, to Derrida, the idea of a full presence, of something existing in purity – even with regards to the origin of this world – has to be dropped. Presence is “a determination or an effect within a system which is no longer that of presence but of *différance*”<sup>296</sup>, and in which every present thing carries the trace of what it is not.<sup>297</sup>

In sum, that which Lévinas criticised as ‘permanence in the [S]ame’, is equally shaken by Derrida’s critique of the ‘metaphysics of the presence’. To both, there is no purely conscious and isolated subject taking part in universal reason, in accordance to which the intelligible is favoured over the sensible, concept over intuition, culture over nature, etc. At the same time and unlike Lévinas, Derrida sees no way to escape the realm of the Same, immanence, and the unfolding of Being. What hence, of transcendence, ethics and a pure peace?

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<sup>292</sup> Derrida, 1982, p. 11

<sup>293</sup> Hence the ending -ance, which suggests an undecidability between activity and passivity.

<sup>294</sup> Derrida, 1982, p. 15

<sup>295</sup> See: Derrida, 1982, pp. 5-22

<sup>296</sup> Derrida, 1982, p. 16

<sup>297</sup> See: Derrida, 1982, pp. 6-7 & 21-24

### 3.2.2 A God Involved in War

Human beings, to Derrida, do not live outside the conceptual, outside language. Language is the medium through which we approach the world. In Derrida's view, there is no language without concepts, or, as he says, "without phrase"<sup>298</sup>. Consequently, there is neither a language nor a subject that escapes the realm of the Same. Otherness in all its aspects needs to be pointed toward from within the language of the Same – the only language there is. Exteriority, for example – that which is not immanence – still has to be named within the "Inside-Outside structure"<sup>299</sup> of space; just as *in-finity* cannot be stated but negatively, by addressing that which is not: finite. Last, if the Other is approached as positive otherness, he becomes "unthinkable, impossible, unutterable"<sup>300</sup>. In other words, if the Other is to mean anything within language – if the discourse of Lévinas is to make any sense – he cannot be 'placed' beyond the origin of the world, he cannot be positively infinite. He has to be finite and mortal, "body, glance, speech, and thought"<sup>301</sup> in one. If not, the separation between soul and body would have to be reintroduced, which is most certainly not Lévinas' ambition. As Martin Hägglund notes, Derrida thus turns Levinas' argument against itself.<sup>302</sup> Still, the questioning of Lévinas' elaboration itself is not Derrida's main concern. Rather, by pointing out the inconsistencies and silent implications in Lévinas' discourse, he wishes to express a more fundamental worry about the *possibility* that language as such can designate that which lies beyond itself. There is a betrayal of thought by language in languages' *inability* to name the "positive plenitude of classical infinity"<sup>303 304</sup>.

What Derrida aims at is the inability of a philosophical discourse to go beyond language in order to find and state its own origin. According to him, this origin is *inscribed* in a movement of difference – of *différance* – which oscillates between, for example, the meaning of inside and outside, day and night, the philosophical and the non-philosophical, or the Same and the Other. There is no purity of origin. Everything found and named is always already included in the world and the light that follows; just as anything beyond it is 'unthinkable, impossible, unutterable'. Accordingly, speech cannot be detached from the violence of a language rooted in light and

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<sup>298</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 147

<sup>299</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 112

<sup>300</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 114

<sup>301</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 115

<sup>302</sup> See: Hägglund, 2004, p. 50

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> See: Derrida, 1978, pp. 106-117

space. I cannot go beyond that, which marks the horizon of our world, to meet the Other with the pure nonviolence of a speech freed from world, Being, history, etc. – all concepts that, to Lévinas, mark an alliance with the Same and hence carry within them both violence and war. Language, Derrida concludes, “in its entirety already has awakened as a fall into light”<sup>305</sup> <sup>306</sup>

Equally has God – as symbol of positive infinity. Because God is infinite, and thus encompassing everything, he cannot purely be life. The classical conception of God as both all life and infinity at the same time, does not make sense. God necessarily needs to be

at once All and Nothing, Life and Death. Which means that God is or appears, is *named* within the difference between All and Nothing, Life and Death. Within difference, and at bottom as Difference itself. This difference is what is called *History*. God is inscribed in it.<sup>307</sup>

In the same way, he is ‘implicated in war’<sup>308</sup>. This is so because war would only cease to exist in a world in which the face of the Other is fully respected – “as that which is not of this world”<sup>309</sup> – or in a world in which it is absolutely not. That is, the end of war only occurs at the end of speech. Again, Derrida turns Lévinas against himself. To Lévinas, peace lies in speech. This, Derrida argues, means that the Other needs to be acknowledged without foregoing language, as absolute respect (as pure nonviolence) and disrespect (as pure violence) of the Other amount to the same thing: silence. Speech has its roots in war, which is

the only system whose basis permits us to speak [...]. With or without God, there would be no war. War supposes and excludes God. We can have a relation to God only within such a system. Therefore war – *for war there is* – is the difference between the face and the finite world without a face. But is not this difference that which has always been called the world, in which the absence-presence of God plays?<sup>310</sup><sup>311</sup>

According to Derrida, there is thus an original inevitability to the violence of discourse. He thus shares Lévinas’ understanding of violence as all that which disrespects a singular being. Language and consequently also speech are bound to light. Therefore language institutes war. However, this war is not violence of the worst kind. Pure violence reigns only when discourse ceases to be, when the Other is no longer approached in dialogue. The worst violence is that of a silence absolutely disrespecting the Other. We – as philosophers and human beings – therefore

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<sup>305</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 113

<sup>306</sup> See: Derrida, 1978, pp. 106-117

<sup>307</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 116

<sup>308</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 107

<sup>309</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 107

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> See: Derrida, 1978, pp. 107-117 & 103-133

have to speak. We have to engage in war if we want to avoid a total victory of the Same, and, with, it the final defeat of the Other. Only thus do we take on the full responsibility for a peace within history; the only peace, which, according to Derrida, is in fact possible. For a philosophy aware of this, aware of its own being placed within history – as violent play between the face and its nullification – “[n]onviolence would be the telos, and not the essence of discourse.”<sup>312</sup> Any philosophical discourse concerned about peace thus needs to take the route of war. This is what Derrida calls the “[e]conomy of violence”<sup>313</sup>, in which violence is used to fight the worst crime, the worst violence, in which dialogue would cease to exist.<sup>314</sup>

History, then, takes on a new meaning. No longer is it thought of in terms of totality. In fact, history, to Derrida, is exactly that which departs from totality, as “the very movement of transcendence, of the excess over the totality without which no totality would appear as such”<sup>315</sup>. Transcendence and immanence – the infinite and finite – merge, and in their difference, in this play, becoming and history evolve. However, this does not also imply a departure from the violence of history. History remains violent: “becoming is war. This polemic is language itself. Its inscription.”<sup>316</sup> Language *inscribes* (lat. *scibere*, ‘to write’) itself, it moves between differences, and hence engages in war. Still, Derrida tentatively asks whether writing might lend itself more easily to peace than speech. Writing, he argues, “can assist itself, for it has *time* and freedom, escaping better than speech from empirical urgencies.”<sup>317</sup> There is less pressure in the written page than in the face-to-face. By writing, it might be easier for the Other to escape presence, to be absent, by the time I receive his word. I might also choose a less violent style when using writing instead of speech, as I am not present when the Other reads my words, and can therefore not harvest their effects. Yet, Derrida is far from stating any peaceful purity of writing – as he would denounce any purity as such. Even while writing, I can still hope to defer my finitude by handing down the signs I produce. Therefore, to Derrida, the “limit between violence and nonviolence is perhaps not between speech and writing but within each of them”<sup>318 319</sup>.

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<sup>312</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 117

<sup>313</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 117

<sup>314</sup> See: Derrida, 1978, pp. 103 & 146-153

<sup>315</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 117

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 102

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> See: Derrida, 1978, pp. 122-133 & 144-150

Speak and write, both we must do; the first in order to avoid the worst violence; the second because it offers a hunch of what this play of *différance* might be, the play in which we remain captured, but in which we still need to state the ‘unthinkable, impossible, unutterable’. Only this way can the non-strategic structure of this play ever be allowed to change toward a better, historical peace. This peace, according to Derrida, needs both the Other as phenomenon and alter ego, and the thought of Being. In fact, it is Derrida’s view that even Lévinas’ argument cannot do without them.<sup>320</sup> Deliberating on this, I shall thus now take an excursion into Derrida’s interpretation of Husserl’s phenomenology and Heidegger’s ontology, and the their link to ethics and peace.

### 3.2.3 Rehabilitating Phenomenology and Ontology

If the Other is to be truly respected, Derrida argues, he needs to *appear* and make sense as other. In fact, he is only other *to* and hence because of me. Respect for the Other therefore requires him to become a phenomenon. Yet, the Other would be a phenomenon of a special kind, one that eludes my grasp.<sup>321</sup> I would see him as alter ego, as other interiority, and hence other origin of this world, but I could not thematically represent him in my thought. To deny the fact that the Other, too, is an ego – an ego to which, however, I have no access – would, in Derrida’s view, be to deny the Other altogether. Because, it is his egoity that marks the difference between him and any other object I have in mind. The heterogeneity of the Same and the Other are hence not as absolute as Lévinas wishes. As Derrida writes, the Other “cannot be absolutely exterior to the [S]ame without ceasing to be other; and [...] consequently, the [S]ame is not a totality closed in upon itself”<sup>322</sup>. This leads, once more, to the origin of language and thought as inscription, as written origin.<sup>323</sup> In the words of Derrida,

the other is absolutely other only if he is an ego, that is, in a certain way, if he is the same as I. Inversely, the other as *res* is simultaneously less other [...] and less ‘the same’ than I. Simultaneously more and less other, [...] this contradiction [...], this impossibility of translating my relation to the other into the rational coherence of language [...] are not the signs of ‘irrationality’: they are the sign, rather, that one may no longer draw inspiration from within the coherence of the *Logos*, but that thought is stifled in the region of the origin of language as dialogue and difference. This origin, as the

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<sup>320</sup> See: Derrida, 1978, pp. 118-151

<sup>321</sup> Derrida calls it the “nonphenomenal phenomenon, [...] [the] nonthematic theme” (Derrida, 1978, p. 128).

<sup>322</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 126

<sup>323</sup> See: Derrida, 1978, pp. 118-133

concrete condition of rationality, is nothing less than 'irrational' but it could not be 'included' in language. This origin is an inscribed inscription.<sup>324</sup>

This origin, as said, institutes violence. However, allowing the Other to appear to the Same – as Husserl did, but Lévinas did not – this violence of me having an image of the Other is the sole possibility for peace there is in this world. Only by understanding that the Other is both other and ego, just as I am both other and ego to him, by accepting this symmetry, can the possibility of my approaching the Other with speech – Lévinas' ethical asymmetry – be envisaged. The result would not be a pure peace, but an economic one, which accepts our being trapped in an originally violent history evolving as oscillation between the silence of pure violence and pure nonviolence.<sup>325</sup>

We cannot go beyond the world of Being to face the Other. In Being we reside and Being, just as phenomenality, is thus needed in order to respectfully approach the Other. This is so because the thought of Being, as introduced by Heidegger, allows me to *let be* that which appears. According to Derrida, it assists me in *recognising* the *essence* of a particular being. Derrida here, plays with the double meaning of both the verb to recognise (as both understanding and respecting) and the concept of essence (as both Being and the true nature of a particular thing). Unlike Lévinas' interpretation, Heidegger's concept of Being as understood by Derrida is not engaged in the struggle for power. Power, like the question of primacy, can only be settled between two beings. Conversely, Being in itself is not a determined something. As such, it cannot be known. It is "but the *Being-of* this existent, and does not exist outside it as a foreign power, or as a hostile or neutral impersonal element"<sup>326</sup>. Accordingly, Being cannot be a concept nor a predication playing its unifying part in the form of judgement. It cannot take the form of a neutral, general term under which singular beings are subsumed. Without ever showing itself by itself, it brings beings forth, and is thus the condition for the possibility of any judgement. In consequence, Heidegger's thought of Being cannot take part in the determination of a first philosophy, and has thus to be separated from ontology as a 'philosophy of power'.<sup>327</sup>

Interpreted this way, the thought of Being fits most practically into Derrida's project. Sceptical of any search for or stating of a pure origin – the *arché* of our world – Derrida can use

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<sup>324</sup> Derrida, 1978, pp. 127-128

<sup>325</sup> See: Derrida, 1978, pp. 118-133

<sup>326</sup> Derrida, 1978, pp. 127-128

<sup>327</sup> See: Derrida, 1978, pp. 134-151

the thought of Being to elude the fight over a first principle. Since Being is needed for all recognition and respect, it precedes both thought and ethics, without ever reigning over them. There is thus no need of appointing one or the other – thought or ethics – as primary. That which actually is first – Being – is veiled, and history – the becoming and deferring of beings – takes its place. Being “occurs in all respects as history and as world”<sup>328</sup>. It is hence no less violent than phenomenology. Yet, like phenomenology, it is most needed in the face and for the recognition of the Other. Derrida concludes:

A Being without violence would be a Being which would occur outside the existent [outside a living being]; nothing; nonhistory; nonoccurrence; nonphenomenality. A speech produced without the least violence would determine nothing, would say nothing, would offer nothing to the other; it would not be *history*, and it would *show* nothing; in every sense of the word, and first of all the Greek sense, it would be speech without *phrase*.<sup>329</sup>

There is a contradiction in Lévinas’ thought. Speech outside the realm of Being – true peace – would “not only propose an ethics without law [...], but a language without phrase”<sup>330</sup>. This, to Derrida, cannot be. Because the face, besides being glance is also speech, word, and thus phrase, implicating history and violence: “[o]ne never escapes *the economy of war*”<sup>331 332</sup>.

On the one hand, it could be said that Derrida gives in to a certain pragmatism. The determination and institution of peace necessarily have to take place within history, within the play of war. Only thus can the worst violence – that of a silence fully negating the Other – be evaded. Declaring peace therefore amounts to choosing the least violence possible. The purity of Lévinas’ face-to-face would amount to an unthinkable illusion. On the other hand, some of Derrida’s more recent texts on issues such as justice and forgiveness suggest that he and Lévinas are not so far apart after all. According to Derrida, justice, forgiveness, and ultimately peace, in their purity do remain ‘unthinkable, impossible, unutterable’ – a madness. But they are nevertheless indispensable for a justice-oriented politics within history. In the end, when considering peace, Derrida’s approach might point toward a movement between pragmatism and madness. And it is to this movement I shall now turn.

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<sup>328</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 144

<sup>329</sup> Derrida, 1978, p.147

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Derrida, 1978, p. 148

<sup>332</sup> See: Derrida, 1978, pp. 134-151

### 3.2.4 Justice, Forgiveness, and the Necessity of Deconstruction

There is, Derrida argues, a difference between justice as such and justice as instituted and executed law. This is important, as it implies that a certain law, as well as the act of respecting or defending it, are not necessarily just. Laws are *enforced*. That is, their institution and perpetuation do not merely gain legitimacy with reference to their apparent representation of justice. Laws are respected because they are linked to a power able to penalise lawbreakers. The law necessitates the use of force. It is the “mystical foundation of [its] authority”<sup>333</sup>. However, not every ability to enforce compliant behaviour is legitimate. There is for example, the often-named case of the tyrant who makes use of violence in an illegitimate way. Justice as law therefore represents the middle ground between unjust violence and justice as such. Or rather, it represents the worldly form of justice, by channelling and monopolising the necessity of historical violence by the means of legalisation. Within this world, there is either illegitimate violence, or legitimate force. Yet, in Derrida’s view, this latter distinction is not as clear. According to him, the institutionalisation of justice as law is always linked to an act of violence regardless of the power, instituting it. He notes,

The operation that consists of founding, inaugurating, justifying law (*droit*), making law would consist of a *coup de force*, of a performative and therefore interpretative violence that in itself is neither just nor unjust and that no justice and no previous law with its founding anterior moment could guarantee or contradict or invalidate.<sup>334</sup>

This is most visible in the founding of the state, which in its determination necessarily holds a violent act, even if horrors such as genocide, deportation, and expulsion do not take place – although, according to Derrida, they most often do. State formation takes place in a limbo between an old (no longer applied) and a new (not yet applicable) corpus of law, which is needed to distinguish violence from force. For that reason, the violence of initiating the existence of a state can only retrospectively be turned into a legitimate and necessary use of force.<sup>335</sup>

The foundation of law – the legitimisation of force – thus bears within itself an originally violent structure, which disappears as soon as law is first stated, legitimised, and henceforth executed. By the act of law’s inauguration, violence and force are linked. Justice as law is a

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<sup>333</sup> Derrida, 1990, p. 937

<sup>334</sup> Derrida, 1990, pp. 941-943

<sup>335</sup> See: Derrida, 1990, pp. 925-961 & 987-993

violence made legal.<sup>336</sup> Herein lies a danger. Not only does the act of founding law elude judgement, as it takes place within a lawless sphere. Any inequality or use of violence prior to the institutionalisation of law is hidden precisely with and by this institutionalisation. The problem here is that the inauguration of law – for example in a revolutionary act – always takes place within a historical moment with prevalent inequalities. As, in this context, it is often “not possible to make the just strong, the strong [...] [are] made just”<sup>337, 338</sup>.

Justice as such is betrayed as soon as it is introduced to this world. It cannot be instituted in its purity. Justice is that which is “infinite, incalculable, rebellious to rule and foreign to symmetry, heterogeneous and heterotropic”<sup>339</sup>, that, which deals with the singularity of the Other without falling prey to its own ambitions of universality. The language of Lévinas lends itself even to Derrida who is hesitant to use it and sceptical of its implications. Justice as such – equity, perhaps – might be something like “absolute dissymmetry”<sup>340</sup> foreign to the calculated equality of law. It is

irreducible in its affirmative character, in its demand of gift without exchange, without circulation, without recognition or gratitude, without economic circularity, without calculation, and without rules, without rationality. And so we can recognize in it, indeed accuse, identify a madness.<sup>341</sup>

Justice as such is mad. In its infinite demand, it escapes rational consideration. The calculable character of justice as law is foreign to it. However, despite their heterogeneous nature, justice as such and justice as law cannot be separated in their consideration, as the latter holds the ambition to speak in the name of the former. According to Derrida, three aporias can be gained from this.<sup>342</sup>

Firstly, executed justice as law, in order to appear just, always needs to be fresh. Simultaneous to its referral to a general rule, a just judgement must seem to examine the distinctiveness of every given situation. In a just judgement the rule thus appears as if stated for the first time, as if the general rule is both disregarded and recreated. The judgement itself hence appears as both with and without regulation. That is, any *present* – any moment of – decision or judgement, re-connects with the original violent act of a law’s inauguration and can never be just

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<sup>336</sup> According to Derrida, this is best displayed in the German word *Gewalt*, which signifies at the same time violence and “legitimate power, authority and public force” (Derrida, 1990, p. 927). (See: Ibid.)

<sup>337</sup> Derrida, 1990, p. 937

<sup>338</sup> See: Derrida, 1990, Derrida, 1990, pp. 925-961

<sup>339</sup> Derrida, 1990, p. 959

<sup>340</sup> Derrida, 1990, p. 959

<sup>341</sup> Derrida, 1990, p. 965

<sup>342</sup> See: Derrida, 1990, pp. 925-961

as such. Likewise and secondly, it escapes full distinctiveness. The moment a judgement is made, the exact moment of decision, always inhibits an in-decidability, a spontaneity, irreducible to the rational, legal examination it was preceded by. A legal judgement can thus never be fully owned, never be entirely controlled. In its decision, something escapes being grasped. There is, again, an indecisiveness to a judgement as just in and out of itself. Consequently and thirdly, a decision is always rash. It eludes all juridical, ethical or political pre-consideration. The instant a decision is made is therefore the closest we can come to this madness, which is alien to the rational discourse of truth and propriety. In its in-decidability and hastiness, the decision-making instant speaks of the possibility of a justice free from violence.<sup>343</sup>

What does Derrida conclude from this? On the one hand, the notion that justice is somehow infinitely granted, without ever expecting anything in return, which in its structure is very similar to Lévinas' prelingual and prejurial ethics, does indeed suggest it to be mad – that is, to be of the realm Derrida calls 'unthinkable, impossible, unutterable'. On the other hand, justice is still craved and its impossibility within the realm of rationality must not necessarily lead to its abandonment. Within history, a specific kind of attitude can be chosen, in order to do justice. That attitude is the attitude of the question, of *deconstruction*. The latter, Derrida writes, "takes place in the interval that separates the undeconstructibility of justice from the deconstructibility of *droit* [justice as law]"<sup>344</sup>. It arises in the face of the ambiguous, of the aporetic, and introduces a movement of destabilisation with regards to long-held values – such as those of property or the proper, the subject, and intentionality. Yet, no new statement does arise from it. Deconstruction merely questions; any construction following it is an indirect effect. This way, deconstruction – as much as possible within this world – evades the violence of determination. Thence, Derrida concludes that "[d]econstruction is justice"<sup>345</sup>. We – especially as philosophers – have thus an incalculable responsibility and obligation to deconstruct, to be the *open question of*

history, the origin and subsequent direction, thus the limits, of concepts of justice, the law and law (*droit*), of values, norms, prescriptions that have been imposed and sedimented there, from then on remaining more or less readable or presupposed.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> See: Derrida 1990, pp. 961-972

<sup>344</sup> Derrida, 1990, p. 945

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Derrida, 1990, p. 953

Deconstruction is especially needed where good conscience chooses to lazily rest with a pre-given determination of justice.<sup>347</sup> To remain awake in the face of the impossible: Does this not sound very similar to Lévinas? In Derrida's treatise on forgiveness, ethics indeed announces itself as madness from beyond.

In fact, "[i]n principle, there is no limit to forgiveness, no *measure*, no moderation, no 'to what point?'"<sup>348</sup>. Only the unforgivable can be forgiven. That is, forgiveness does not aim at the restoration of normality, of a balance between victim and perpetrator. It does not lend itself to calculation. In order for it to be pure, forgiveness "*should* remain exceptional and extraordinary [...]: as if it interrupted the ordinary course of historical temporality"<sup>349</sup>. Unconditional and uneconomic, pure forgiveness is not part of an exchange in which the perpetrator asks for and the victim grants forgiveness. It is given to both "the fault and the guilty"<sup>350</sup>, despite and because of the fact that there is no hope of the latter to ever repent. Forgiveness, therefore, resembles an infinite movement. It seems unthinkable, impossible: a madness. Forgiveness, Derrida concludes, is irreducible to politics or the law. In effect, it remains heterogeneous, unknown to consciousness altogether. It "cannot, if it *must* not *present itself* as such, and thus exhibit itself in consciousness without at the same time denying itself, betraying of reaffirming a sovereignty"<sup>351</sup> <sup>352</sup>.

However, Derrida continues, forgiveness is often confused with other, more easily measured and calculated concepts such as reconciliation, and with it "excuse, regret, amnesty, prescription"<sup>353</sup>. Linked to these, forgiveness has taken on a key aspect in post-intrastate conflict scenarios – the most famous of which is perhaps the holding of truth commissions. This "globalisation of the scene of repentance"<sup>354</sup>, to Derrida, has its origin in the Nuremberg Trial, where "legal concepts such as 'crime against humanity'"<sup>355</sup> were first born. There is, Derrida writes, something ironic to this public and spectacular self-accusation by and of the human race. In addition, the concept of 'crime against humanity' seems to suggest a sacredness linked to the human being. A sacredness, which, in fact, has its root in the Abrahamic – that is, Jewish, but

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<sup>347</sup> See: Derrida, 1990, pp. 921-945 & 1035-1045

<sup>348</sup> Derrida, 2001, p. 27

<sup>349</sup> Derrida, 2001, p. 32

<sup>350</sup> Derrida, 2001, p. 39

<sup>351</sup> Derrida, 2001, p. 48

<sup>352</sup> See: Derrida, 2001, pp. 27, 32-39 & 47-51

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> Derrida, 2002, p. 381

<sup>355</sup> Derrida, 2002, p. 382

especially Christian – tradition, where concepts such as ‘neighbour’ and ‘fellow creature’ take on a central role. Derrida therefore suggests the globalisation of reconciliation processes to be the silent continuation of a “Christian convulsion-conversion-confession”<sup>356</sup> outside the Christian church.<sup>357</sup>

All this does not mean that processes of reconciliation should not take place. There is, Derrida admits, a need for memory, mourning, and, even amnesty, in order for the state to function again. However, it should not be forgotten that offerings of reconciliation and amnesty often contain a strategic element. They are a pragmatic approach. It should therefore be stressed that this “reconstitution of a health or a ‘normality’ as necessary and desirable as it would appear [...], is not forgiveness; it is only a political strategy or a psycho-therapeutic economy”<sup>358</sup>. Forgiveness and the political process of reconciliation represent the two poles of the unconditional and the conditional. As such, they remain irreconcilable, “absolutely heterogeneous”<sup>359</sup>. At the same time, they cannot be separated.<sup>360</sup> As Derrida writes,

If one wants, and it is necessary, forgiveness to become effective, concrete, historic; if one wants it to *arrive*, to happen by changing things, it is necessary that this purity engage itself in a series of conditions of all kinds.<sup>361</sup>

In the end, Derrida remains torn between what he calls the “‘hyperbolic’ ethical vision of forgiveness and the reality of a society at work in pragmatic processes of reconciliation”<sup>362</sup>. He remains undecided between a desire for purity and unconditional ethics, where the worst crimes can be forgiven without repentance, and the pragmatism in which we, as historical beings, need to engage in order to navigate and negotiate our way toward a peace within history. Ultimately, knowing that only a historical peace is possible, or in fact thinkable, Derrida contents himself with the necessity of a reference toward that which overflows mind and time.<sup>363</sup> The ‘unthinkable, impossible, unutterable’ has to remain the reference point of law and politics, not as its essence, but as unreachable *telos*. Pure, infinite justice and forgiveness – perhaps not so far away from Lévinas’ vision of goodness and peace in the face-to-face – will never *arrive*. They remain what is always yet to come. Because, as Behnke writes, life implies difference,

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<sup>356</sup> Derrida, 2001, p. 31

<sup>357</sup> See: Derrida, 2001, pp. 27-32

<sup>358</sup> Derrida, 2001, p. 50

<sup>359</sup> Derrida, 2001, p. 44

<sup>360</sup> See: Derrida, 2001, pp. 40-47

<sup>361</sup> Derrida, 2001, pp. 44-45

<sup>362</sup> Derrida, 2001, p. 51

<sup>363</sup> See: Derrida, 2001, pp. 51-59

antagonism and conflict. It implies history and change. Infinite, ‘perpetual peace’ on the other hand, is a peace of the dead. What conclusions, then, can be gained from the dialogue between Lévinas and Derrida with regards to peace?

### 3.3 Another Conclusion – Attacking Good Conscience

First of all, it is to be noted that Lévinas did respond to the criticism Derrida raised in *Violence and Metaphysics*. While in *Totality and Infinity* Lévinas merely differentiates between language as thought and language as speech, a new distinction is introduced in his later work *Otherwise than Being*. Here, speech is presented as holding both the act of *saying* and the conveying of what is being *said*.<sup>364</sup> This underscores in more detail that the relation I have with the Other is not prior to language as thought, prior to politics, and the roles we take in society. There is not first speech, and then thought in a sense which makes the primacy of speech another present that has slid into the past. In speech, the saying is ‘past perfect’, diachronous to the common understanding of time. It has neither been present, nor is it reachable by the means of my consciousness. There is thus an aspect of speech – the saying – which interrupts the order of time from beyond. Without it, speech in the traditional sense – in which a phrase with a message is transmitted – could not take place.<sup>365</sup> As William P. Simmons notes,

Prior to the speech act, the speaker must address the Other, and before the address is the approach of the Other or proximity. Before any speech, before any intention to speak, there is an ‘exposure of the ego to the other, the non-indifference to another’, which is not a simple ‘intention to address a message’. The saying includes not only the content of the speech, but the process itself which includes the Thou who is addressed and the speaker as attendant to the spoken word.<sup>366</sup>

As said, it is the saying that allows me to be close to the Other, and thereby initiates me as an ‘I infinitely responsible for the Others well-being. But speech is not only saying. It always consists of both the saying and the said – that is thematisation, meaning conveyed. Ethics, to Lévinas, is not something outside the realm of Being in a spatial or temporal sense; it disturbs Being, immanence, and also the order of politics, because it escapes our means of cognition. “[N]on-thematizable, non-utterable, impossible”<sup>367</sup> ethics is that which interrupts “Derrida’s world of the

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<sup>364</sup> See: Lévinas, 1981, pp. 5-7

<sup>365</sup> See: Simmons, 1999, pp. 87-89

<sup>366</sup> Simmons, 1999, p. 88

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

violent language”<sup>368</sup>, the world of truth, of politics, and estimations of justice. According to Simmons, Lévinas is well aware of the violence the order of justice and politics entails. It is, after all, making use of truth, judgement, and cognition. Yet, in this violence there is a movement that oscillates between the saying and the said, a movement that is often neglected. Therefore, “[s]teps must be taken to maintain the potency of the ethical saying”<sup>369</sup>. Ethics as the foundation of truth must not be forgotten. Philosophy’s primary task should subsequently be to constantly remind of, and keep watch over the “oscillation between the saying and the said”<sup>370</sup>.<sup>371</sup> This is so because, in the words of Annabel Herzog,

something can be ‘said’ about the interaction of ethics and politics, because of politics. If human relations were only ethics – that is if there were only two persons facing each other – philosophy would be impossible. Philosophy [...] emerges in society as a social activity, namely, as a process of knowledge, foundation, representation comprehension, ‘totalisation’. Lévinas aims at showing that there is an ‘alternative (non-Greek) approach to meaning and truth’, that is, at revealing *in philosophy* the irreducible otherness which resists the philosophical logos, the ‘ability of philosophy ... to unsay itself’. Still, philosophy is essentially Greek: when he describes the dual relation, Lévinas proposes a *thought* about holiness, not holiness itself.<sup>372</sup>

As this citation shows, Lévinas and Derrida are much closer than it first appears. Both are led by a deep concern with regards to the possibility of respecting alterity – the Other for what he or she singularly is. This concern springs from an uneasiness, caused by both the Western tradition of thought, and the politics that emanate from it. The West is taken by both to be slumbering in good conscience, denying the violence of its universalising and neutralising claims to truth, and its political, economic, but also cultural imperialism. Both Lévinas and Derrida trace the problems of this violence to a particular thought of originality, of *arché*, which sets the rational subject as centre and initiator of the world as we see it. In other words, both criticise the predominant Western understanding of autonomous and self-present subjectivity. In opposition, they introduce the world as without having a traceable origin. In fact, within the realm of Being, human beings have a conceptual, and hence lingual relation to the world. That which gives rise to the possibility of cognition thus necessarily lies beyond comprehension. It is *an-archic*. Equally, both regard the *an-archic* origin of the world to lie in a movement of irreducible relatedness. In

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Simmons, 1999, p. 89

<sup>370</sup> Simmons, 1999, p. 84

<sup>371</sup> See: Simmons, 1999, pp. 84-89

<sup>372</sup> Herzog, 2002, p. 206

the thought of Lévinas, the world arises due to my infinite desire and responsibility for the Other – introducing a movement towards that which I am not, without this movement ever reaching an end. *Différance*, on the other hand, points towards meaning unfolding due to an oscillation between what is and what is not, between that which is set and that which is deferred, neglected, denied, etc. Forgetting this an-archic original movement of relation to both means making way for rationally legitimised subjugation and domination.<sup>373</sup>

In short, purely residing in a world of Being controlled by an autonomous subject not only denies that which makes subjectivity possible in the first place; it also gives rise to violence. Both Lévinas and Derrida hereby operate with a very wide understanding of violence as that which negates the singularity of another being. Violence is not regarded as an affective outburst of force. It cannot be restricted to the irrationality of physical harm, opposed to the rationality of a transactional peace. Rather, physical violence is merely the expression of an approach to the world, in which the ego is thought to be self-present, in control, and above all valuable, and to be protected in its autonomy. Violence is the expression of ontology as egology, of logocentrism, and thus inherently dormant in the Western tradition, not opposed to it. Violence is that which works according to the rules of logic and rationality. Peace, on the other hand, is mad, unutterable, and incomprehensible. According to both Lévinas and Derrida, it is the task and responsibility of philosophy to constantly be vigilant with regards to and remind us of this. They differ, however, with regards to what form this responsibility, and its political implications are to take.<sup>374</sup>

Lévinas, like Derrida, locates the possibility of peace as pure goodness performed for the Other in the pre-linguistic realm. Peace is ethical. However, unlike Derrida, he does not fatalistically conclude the impossibility of nonviolence. Instead, he calls everybody to his or her responsibility of letting the ethical moment back into our social relations. If peace cannot be conceptualised, controlled or planned, it has to be *performed*. In other words, Lévinas demands ethical practice, the very act of leaving the familiar paths of a life merely concerned about its own survival and benefit in order to openly receive and abide by the Other's call for help. So much is clear, and not enough; because, the Other is not the only one I will meet on the street. In his eyes, I equally see the third party. I see all those out of my reach, whose lives will eventually be

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<sup>373</sup> See: Bernasconi, 1997, p. 90; Bernstein, 1987, pp. 96-105 & 112; Critchley, 2004, p. 182; Delhom/Hirsch, 2007, p. 47; Flatscher, 2014, p. 5; Herzog, 2002, pp. 208-212; Reynolds, 2001, pp. 35-44 & 52

<sup>374</sup> See: Bernard-Donals, 2005, p. 62; Bernstein, 1987, p. 94; Flatscher, 2014, pp. 4-5

betrayed by my inability to attend to the needs of all. Ethics – my relation to the Other – cannot be absolute. It is torn open by the third party – the multiplicity and plurality of all humanity – which calls for justice, and, with it, politics. So, just as there is no saying in itself, ethics does not suffice in an attempt at peace. The first, second, and third party do not appear in a chronological order. They inexchangeably and irreducibly exist at the same time. Accordingly, there simultaneously have to be both ethics – my responsibility for the Other – and politics – justice for all others: ethics in order to remind equalising politics of my indebtedness to the Other; politics in order to assist me in fulfilling the impossible task of being infinitely responsible for all humanity. As Victoria Tahmasebi writes, “[f]or Lévinas, not only do politics and the state originate in goodness, but goodness must be present in every working of politics”<sup>375</sup>. Justice in the form of laws and institutions is called for, to facilitate the state’s duty to secure the fulfilment of ethical responsibility.<sup>376</sup>

Conversely, Derrida does not believe in the possibility of an ethics in which I can fully respect the Other for what he is. As Martin Hägglund notes, there exists a “necessity of discrimination”<sup>377</sup> in the thought of Derrida. This is so, because the violent play of *différance* is needed for any ethical consideration or practice. The Other is only other in relation to me. Likewise, I have to acknowledge, and consequently thematise him as such. There cannot be any respect for the Other, if he does not somehow appear in the phenomenal world. This is not to say that the Other is fully accessible to my mind. In the phenomenal play of *différance*, within Being, he is still irreducible, and hence a mystery to me. The consequences of attributing phenomenality to the Other are fundamental. Not only does Derrida insist that a pure – i.e., non-violent – peace is impossible; he equally introduces violence as something productive. Without violence, nothing would be determined. There would be no ‘thing’. Violence is thus not to be regarded as inherently bad. However, if it is forgotten that every determination produces exclusion, domination and destructive violence will inevitably haunt us. In consequence, there is a moral claim in Derrida’s approach that asks us to aim at the least violence possible within the play of *différance*. One way to ensure this “lesser violence”<sup>378</sup> lies in the art of deconstruction. Jack Reynolds interprets deconstruction as consisting of two steps, “the first being the reversal or

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<sup>375</sup> Tahmasebi, 2010, p. 535

<sup>376</sup> See: Bernard-Donals, 2005, p. 75; Herzog, 2002, pp. 204-206 & 211 & 221; Tahmasebi, 2010, pp. 535-536; Flatscher, 2014, p. 3 & 11-23

<sup>377</sup> Hägglund, 2004, p. 40

<sup>378</sup> Hägglund, 2004, p. 47

inversion of the prioritised term of a metaphysical opposition, and the second being the displacement or disruption of that opposition by corrupting it from within”<sup>379</sup>. Said otherwise, deconstruction is needed where hierarchical oppositions – such as culture vs. nature, or the subject vs. the other, or the object – are normalised by good conscience. What it does is to show the logical and normative inappropriateness of the opposition, without stating or determining anything new – that is, without instituting another, potentially violating opposition. This is not to say, that no action should be taken to create a society as peaceful as possible. There is a need to both try and attend to the singularity of every human being, and at the same time shape and institutionalise a political, legal and economic order. Authority cannot be abolished; it needs to be constantly questioned, because “there is no ‘centred structure’, no ‘fundamental ground’”<sup>380</sup>, by reference to which a convergence with prescribed ethics can be guaranteed. As Reynolds writes,

For Derrida, responsibility to the other is such that we cannot know whether we have or haven’t made a mistake by them. In deciding, we endure the trial of undecidability that ensures that there is no right answer, since the decision is that which must leap into the unknown.<sup>381</sup>

Deconstructive criticism does not measure given injustices or violations by comparing them to another desired state. Such criticism must remain a process, without knowing where it might lead. Peace is a madness, and in its purity – without a name, but a deep concern for the well being of every Other in his or her singularity – it always remains to come.<sup>382</sup>

Rather than providing a conclusion, Lévinas and Derrida hence ask us to take the attitude of an open question. As much as possible, we first need to be open to the arrival of the singular Other, even though he might never fully arrive and become present to our consciousness. Second, we have to remain vigilant when it comes to the translation of the ethical realm – that which is pure, and hence unutterable, unthinkable, non-thematisable – into the rational calculation of politics and the law. Third, we must embrace an attitude of suspicion wherever good conscience rests all-to-comfortably on absolutisms, or totalisations presented as universal, neutral, fixed, and present in themselves. No absoluteness or totality can exist without exclusion. We – as beings that make use of determination to orient themselves – therefore have a responsibility to look out for that and look after those left out. Exclusion and disrespect for the singular are inherent aspects of our lingual system. They will never cease to be. Yet, in being attentive, in embodying this

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<sup>379</sup> Reynolds, 2001, p. 36

<sup>380</sup> Bernstein, 1987, p. 96

<sup>381</sup> Reynolds, 2001, p. 39

<sup>382</sup> See: Bernstein, 1987, pp. 97-108 & 112; Buonomo, 1998, pp. 171-176; Hägglund, 2004, pp. 40-56; Patton, 2007, pp. 772-775; Reynolds, 2001, pp. 36-40

threefold attitude of an open question, the 'greater violence' that could spring from determination in the form of domination, imperialism, colonisation, war, etc. might be reduced. Rather than a state of being, attained by merely engineering the right conditions for it to perpetually prosper, worldly peace, according to Lévinas and Derrida, is a process of approximation to a purity never to be reached. It needs to be performed, constantly changed and kept in check, knowing that some form of violence will always be a part of our lives. Violence we can know and recognise, not peace. To approach peace, we cannot plan, or mechanically engineer standardised forms of social, political legal, and economic organisation: we need to take a walk into the open.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> For an interesting article on peace as open process, see: Schmitt, 2006

#### 4 Discussion – The Liberal Peace Revisited

In the preceding chapters, I have introduced the liberal peace as a coin with two sides. I have described the theoretical *discourse* on the liberal peace as drawing mainly on ideas and ideals of the Enlightenment period and encompassing three sets of ideas. First, the liberal peace includes concepts of political philosophy to appease the natural state of men and to safeguard the life, freedom and property of every individual via the means of an original social contract. Second, it comprises liberal theories of international relations, and their focus on international regulation, laws and institutions. Third, it consists of economic approaches regarding the necessity of trade and the free market as inherent to human nature. These three aspects of the liberal discourse – democratic states, international regulation and free trade – represent the cornerstones of the liberal (Western) *condition*, of which Wilson is said to be the founding father, and which is described by Doyle as fundamentally different from the rest of the world, because it is lacking internal conflict. To the liberal family it might hence seem like a logical consequence to globally spread its supposedly peaceful liberal condition via the highly standardised and comprehensive means of liberal peacebuilding.

Yet, as I have argued, the liberal story of continuing progress and growing peace has a downside, which can also be traced back to ideas and ideals of the Enlightenment. A look at the historical context of the Enlightenment period, as well as the developments that followed it, show that liberal politics are not as pure and violence-free as described by their supporters. Racism, colonialism, the slave trade, and the – often violent – engineering of cooperative governments leave a brutal trail in liberal history-writing. If looked at from its downside, liberalism thus seems to be part of a grand strategy of domination and exploitation. In other words, liberalism and imperialism appear to be closely linked. Liberal imperialism is maintained at all levels of society. As a global ‘capitalist socio-economic order’, it *perpetuates* liberal principles that do not benefit those asked to institute them, but those asking. Despite fostering and upholding inequality and structures of exploitation, liberal principles as well as the interventions that attempt to institute them are *legitimised* by a thorough moral discourse, of which R2P is but one example. Last, these liberal principles are *implemented* on a local level, whereby the population affected is often met with generalised stereotypes, as a consequence of which it is disregarded or pushed aside.

The liberal peace, I conclude, as Richmond does, is in need of being changed. However, it is questionable if Richmond’s turning toward the local-local will actually be able to leave the

liberal trap of imposing identities on those, thought to be in need of our help. The local-local is but another category thought to tell the good from the bad. It does not assist in meeting the human beings affected by violent intrastate conflict for what they are. I have suggested that this might be the case, because problems of racism and stereotypes lie much deeper than in picking the right approach to local peacebuilding. They might lie in our very basic understanding of what it means to be human and how we relate to and engage in the world. Consequently, an inquiry regarding the philosophical foundations of the liberal peace is urgently called for.

In what follows I shall therefore juxtapose the liberal peace with the philosophical approaches of Lévinas and Derrida. I think it is important to note that both Lévinas and Derrida have been claimed to be of liberal heritage. I will consider these claims separately for each philosopher in order to subsequently ask what critique and alternatives Lévinas and Derrida might offer to the hegemonic liberal peace discourse.

#### 4.1 Lévinas on Private Property and Embodied Peace

According to Simmons, Lévinas sees the ideal of a self-critical order of justice and politics fulfilled in the liberal state.<sup>384</sup> Simmons draws this conclusion from a statement made by Lévinas in *The Paradox of Morality*, where Lévinas writes,

There is no politics for accomplishing the moral, but there are certainly some politics which are further from it or closer to it. For example, I've mentioned Stalinism to you. I've told you that justice is always a justice which desires a better justice. This is the way that I will characterize the liberal state. The liberal state is a state which holds justice as the absolutely desirable end and hence as a perfection. Concretely the liberal state has always admitted – alongside the written law – human rights as a parallel institution. [...] And consequently, I believe that it is absolutely obvious that the liberal state is more moral than the fascist state, and closer to the morally ideal state.<sup>385</sup>

A liberal reading of this statement is indeed problematic for the argument I want to make in the thesis at hand. Equally problematic is Simon Critchley's accusation of Lévinas' focus on fraternity, monotheism, filiality, etc. as being androcentric, and of his attitude toward Israel as being that of a Zionist.<sup>386</sup> Outside the Greek and the Jewish tradition, Critchley cites Lévinas as

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<sup>384</sup> See: Simmons, 1999, pp. 90-100

<sup>385</sup> Lévinas, in: Simmons, 1999, p. 99

<sup>386</sup> At this point, I want to avoid any misunderstanding or accusations with regards to anti-Semitism. I myself do have a Jewish background. However, I think it utterly important to openly discuss the controversies and violent patterns of domination that Israel is engaged in. An uncritical Zionist stance, therefore, can pose a problem when it

saying that there is either the yellow peril – Russia and China – or merely exotic dance, both of which do not fully embrace human nature. Nonetheless, Critchley is optimistic about finding a “nonfraternalistic, nonmonotheistic, nonandrocentric, nonfilial, nonfamilial, and non-Zionist conception of the relation of ethics and politics”<sup>387</sup> within Lévinas’ approach,<sup>388</sup> and so am I. In fact, like Tahmasebi I will argue that, if thoroughly analysed, it becomes clear that “there *is* a radical distance between Lévinas’ thought and the Western liberal tradition”<sup>389</sup>.

#### 4.1.1 Progress for Whom?

According to Tahmasebi, liberalism builds on three pillars: a particular conception of the individual, a rational interpretation of peace, and a specific kind of economic regulation. All three she sees rejected by Lévinas, who fundamentally criticises Western philosophy’s view of a rational subject able to cognitively access and materially acquire anything it finds in the world. The liberal peace remains trapped in the realm of the Same and its ‘egology’, because of its view on subjectivity as purely rational and simultaneously still *self-interested*. The rights and freedoms to be ensured by the social contract concern me and my life alone. The justice of a liberal society is merely instituted to maintain a more or less peaceful possibility of free trade. But trade is not always free, let alone just. Wars to protect self-interest continue to be waged, even by the ‘liberal family’. The liberal peace remains an “armed peace”<sup>390</sup>. In seeking the tranquillity and order necessary to appease conflicting self-interest, it does not leave the danger of totalitarianism behind. Because self-interest persist, the liberal peace needs to strive for domination and control, and thereby make (global) securitisation a top priority. Alterity needs to be colonised and made to disappear. This leads Tahmasebi to conclude that, from Lévinas’ point of view, the liberal society is a hypocritical society.<sup>391</sup>

To get to the point: the liberal peace does not lead all of humanity to a prosperous and emancipatory condition. Its downside is not something that can eventually be overcome: it is inherently part of the liberal agenda. From a Lévinasian perspective, this is so, because of a

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comes to critical reflection. (See for example the movie *Roadmap to Apartheid*: <http://roadmaptoapartheid.org/> (last accessed: 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2014)

<sup>387</sup> Critchley, 2004, p. 177

<sup>388</sup> See: Critchley, 2004, pp. 73-176

<sup>389</sup> Tahmasebi, 2010, p. 523

<sup>390</sup> Tahmasebi, 2010, p. 530

<sup>391</sup> See: Tahmasebi, 2010, pp. 524-532

specific epistemology that considers the subject able to rationally understand, grasp, and access everything it meets. Colonisation and imperialism follow, on every level of society, because such an approach to the world does not tolerate otherness. On a global scale, the liberal peace supports a ‘capitalist socio-economic order’ by forming political and legal institutions that serve to secure the freedom to pursue economic self-interest. Cases of non-cooperation, violent conflict, or governments with too much of a social agenda, etc. are presented as threats to the inherent right of every individual to be protected in its autonomy and rationality. Restrictions of free, individual entrepreneurship are used to morally justify interventions that follow highly standardised pre-set agendas. These agendas are mainly at service of the intervening countries. It is therefore not surprising that liberal peacebuilding is unable to respectfully meet the needs and aspirations of the society it intervenes in. Even a post-liberal peace remains trapped in the modus of the Same by imposing yet another category to which a pluralistic society has to submit itself. In short, the liberal peace is inherently contradictory. It fights so hard for individual freedom, and at the same time disrespects the singularity of every person, because the political order it seeks is meant to unify, and totalise. It fights in and for the realm of the Same. Liberal imperialism is the result of it.

However, the most important critique of the liberal peace Lévinas has to offer remains yet to be named. It is an attack on the institutionalisation of private property, through the protection of which the liberal peace supports and perpetuates inequality and exploitation; and to what degree indeed. For example, if it is true that the ‘War on Terrorism’ and the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq were and are partly conducted because the West’s provision of oil is threatened – a threat that has been made sure to be included in a more comprehensive definition of security – it becomes shockingly clear, just how far the ‘liberal family’ is willing to go in order to perpetuate its own advantages. This is not to speak of the torture tactics applied at Abu Ghraib and Guantànamo, and the rational, transactional, and clinical discourse used to legitimise them.<sup>392</sup> By equalizing the institutionalisation of private property and inequality with freedom and peace, the liberal peace undeniably is hypocritical, as Tahmasebi stated. However, hypocrisy is a mild charge when compared to the accusations of neo-colonialism, imperialism, and the brutal measures applied to upkeep the hegemony of the West. What alternative, then, can be found in Lévinas’ approach?

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<sup>392</sup> See: Ganser, 2014; Pugliese, 2013, pp. 1-13

#### 4.1.2 Embodied Peace

In Lévinas' view, not grasping but giving lies at the heart of objectivity and truth. Openness to and infinite responsibility for the Other mark the 'locus' of peace. Drawing from this, Lévinas visualises a state that is directly shaped by its society; a state that respects the singularity of every citizen by committing to a participatory plurality, instead of being concerned with belting a false – because unequal – unity. Lévinas' approach to peace thus encompasses two levels. On a face-to-face level, peace is embodied<sup>393</sup> and performed. It is a peace which embraces subjectivity in its corporeity and intentionality, and asks me to receive the Other for what he or she is. Facing the Other, peace is responsibility, it is *ethical*. For the building of peace, this might call for an attitude of radical humility and hesitation. It is the Other who is in need; but it is also the Other who demands my goodness and asks for my help. In consequence, self-appointed peacebuilding will ever fail to respect otherness, if it continues to mechanically replicate prearranged *conditions* apparently needed for the development of sustainable peace. If requested by the people affected by violent conflict, peacebuilding might at the most be a continuous *process* into the unknown, shaped by an openness to, respect for, and hence support of the needs, values, and ideas of the Other.

However, with the entry of the third party, peace equally needs to become a *just* peace. That is, it needs to embrace institutionalisation, politics, and the law. Now, just what exactly the entry of the third party calls for is widely and controversially discussed. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the interpretations of Tahmasebi and Critchley might provide a useful complementary proposition. According to Tahmasebi, the need for political and legal institutions is indeed created by the entry of the third party; yet, they are founded for the sake of the Other. It is the protection of the Other that defines my freedom and introduces questions of rights. Like Marx, Tahmasebi argues, Lévinas takes into account the corporeity and materiality of suffering, exploitation, and injustice, and thus calls us to go beyond the present capitalist economic order. But Lévinas does not take a Marxist road, even though he regards the "liberation from economic exploitation as the 'first freedom'"<sup>394</sup>. Beyond the formation of class-bondage, Lévinas invites us

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<sup>393</sup> For this term, see: Barnett/Clark/Dikeç, 2009, p. 6

<sup>394</sup> Tahmasebi, 2010, p. 532

fight for the rights of an Other and to foster non-reciprocal relations, based on the divinity and mortality of the Other's face. In other words, ethics is to weave itself into politics.<sup>395</sup>

Accordingly, Critchley stresses that even in politics, there "is a universal ethical criterion for action"<sup>396</sup>, to which I am passive and mentally oblivious, but which guides my actions all the same. He argues that

if we are not going to bow beneath the fate of contemporary neoimperial power intoxicated by military moralism [...]; if we are going to be able to face and face down the political horror of the present, [...] then I think politics has to be empowered by a metapolitical moment of disturbance, an anarchic ethical injunction and the experience of an infinite ethical demand.<sup>397</sup>

This leads him to introduce an understanding of politics that is very different from the present governmental order, which is blind to the *an-archy* of ethics. Governmental politics reduces politics to policing, and is very much concerned with its own origin and foundation. As said, it fears both multiplicity and singularity, and therefore engages in a process of pacification and tranquillisation by ascribing roles and defining social relations. As a consequence, Critchley regards any political action led by ethics as a "manifestation of dissensus"<sup>398</sup>. It has the potential to disturb. Following Lévinas, Critchley argues that politics needs to be understood as manifold, anarchic processes of emancipation and democratisation shaped by the multiplicity of the *demos* – the people. Politics, Critchley concludes, "is now, and it is many"<sup>399</sup>.<sup>400</sup> Like peacebuilding, it needs to embrace the open road. Would this be Derrida's vision, too?

#### 4.2 Derrida on Hierarchy and a Peace to Come

Drawing on yet another one of Derrida's irreducible connections between purity and pragmatism – the one between conditional and unconditional hospitality<sup>401</sup> – Gideon Baker notes that, unlike Kant, Derrida does not provide any "universalising, programmable ethics"<sup>402</sup> with regards to intervention or peacebuilding. There is an element of undecidability, when it comes to the morality of peace operations. Based on this undecidability, Baker sees the ethics of hospitality

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<sup>395</sup> See: Tahmasebi, 2010, pp. 532-540

<sup>396</sup> Critchley, 2004, p. 180

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> Critchley, 2004, p. 183

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> See: Critchkey, 2004, pp. 182-183

<sup>401</sup> For a short overview, see: Derrida, 2006

<sup>402</sup> Baker, 2010, p. 90

threatened, on the one hand, by a radical ban on intervention, and on the other, by a “domesticating will to intervene”<sup>403</sup>. Hospitality can only be given to those, who make it to my home. Correspondingly, all others are in danger of being neglected. Therefore, Baker concludes that sometimes hospitality needs to be forsaken in order for intervention to take place. Intervention and hospitality, then, are both part of an ethics that is concerned with otherness, but that is at the same time aware of the necessity to sometimes get involved in a dirty and violent business, such as military interventions for peace. Baker draws on Derrida’s notion that violence is necessarily part of this world. Pure nonviolence is not an option. From this he concludes that sometimes, the least violence might be that of a humanitarian intervention.<sup>404</sup>

This example shows very well how Derrida’s approach can be used to legitimise a very violent peacebuilding practice. However, it is doubtful whether it is justly done so. Baker, in my view, does not go far enough in his analysis as to what the historical roots of humanitarian interventions are, in what context the term was invented, and for what reasons its practice is pursued. Derrida’s approach, to me, does not seem so simple. Rather, he forces us never to rest comfortably on any given assumption – even one that tries to argue in favour of a responsibility to protect. We need to *be* an open question, and *embody* a deconstructive attitude.

#### 4.2.1 Light and Darkness

As ‘peace spreads, it collapses. Peace becomes war and war becomes peace’. Or, as Necati Polat bluntly titles his article, “Peace is War.”<sup>405</sup> These citations shed light on one central aspect of a possible Derridean critique of the liberal peace. The liberal peace presents itself as pure, unarguably morally good, and thus inherently preferable over any other social arrangement. It regards itself, Polat writes, as present condition, as “a state of being ontologically fixed and secure in itself, while war is an aberration”<sup>406, 407</sup>. However, pure presence does not exist. Purity can only be created in opposition to what it is not, or what it does not want to be. The light of progressing liberalism can only be upheld when opposed to the affective, primordial, brutal, and uncivilised ways of the rest of the world. With this, the liberal peace necessarily invites darkness,

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> See: Baker, 2010, pp. 87-99

<sup>405</sup> Polat, 2010, p. 317

<sup>406</sup> Polat, 2010, p. 318

<sup>407</sup> See: Polat, 2010, p. 318

brutality, and violence into its own ranks. Light always carries a trace of darkness, just as darkness always holds a flickering light. The seed for peace might therefore not lie where peace has taken on a hegemonic status, but where violence is taking place.

Furthermore, even though there is a *play of différance*, this play is not accidental. It is strategic. Perhaps, like a brain, it is wired, with certain connections being stronger than others. The perpetuation of structural inequality might just be such a strong connection. But as the play of *différance* remains invisible, this connection is equally made to disappear, by the way certain concepts – the visible effects of *différance* – are determined. A critical analysis of the liberal peace in line with Derrida therefore needs to first inquire about the categories with which the liberal peace operates, and how these categories might favour a certain interpretation of the world, while excluding many others. Second, it needs to analyse how these categories are used in favour of a very specific approach to political practice while again dismissing others.

The opposition between the light of peace and the darkness of violence is a hierarchical opposition. Otherness is negatively constructed. This strongly affects our interpretation of what is actually going on in contexts of violent conflict. Afghanistan is an illustrative example for various reasons. First, it was declared a failed state, not because there was no monopoly of power, but because those in power – the Taliban – were not respected as political actors by the US. Second, in its DDR program, the ‘fighters’ to be demobilised were falsely thought to be unemployed and frustrated young men. The power to interpret a certain situation is hence closely linked to social, political and economic power. This is very well exemplified in Laura Appeltshauser’s discourse analysis on the use of the concept ‘violence’ within peace research.

Peace research, Appeltshauser argues, generally operates with a very narrow understanding of violence. Violence

is tacitly assumed to be physical, intentional, personal and direct [...]. Violence emerges as the manifest product of (individual) acts, spatially and temporarily contained, not as a latent process, mitigated by structural factors. It is normatively charged with being negative, destructive and deviant from the normality of politics and the attainable harmony of communication and dialogue [...]. [I]t is largely conceived as quantifiable step in conflict dynamics, or a measurable phenomenon, amenable to scientific positivist research – hardly worthy of any meta-theoretical or philosophical reflection.<sup>408</sup>

In consequence, peace research locates most occurrence of violence in the global South. The often violent origins of modern states, on the other hand, are rewritten in terms of progress and

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<sup>408</sup> Appeltshauser, 2014, p. 9

civilisation; our military activities presented as peace missions toward societies or regimes that have fallen beyond the possibility of dialogue and rational argumentation; and our perpetuation of economic exploitation is sold as developmental aid. In short and more fundamentally, by linking peace to a rational and reasonable departure from a violent state of nature, any society immersed in civil war can be presented as primordial, irrational, affective, and hence in need of our civilising advice. The definition of violence, Appeltshauser concludes, is a highly political act. Research is not neutral. This is not merely the case, because concepts, definitions and interpretations disrespect the singularity of any given situation; but because concepts perpetuate, and are intentionally used to uphold given power relations.<sup>409</sup> To go back to Crush: All Western words need to be considered as part of an imperial world.

The liberal peace can thus serve as a discursive legitimation of the present ‘capitalist socio-economic order’, the perpetuation of which needs to be regarded as rationally and morally favourable on all levels of society. The maintenance of this image can be taken as far as to conceal the pursuit of political and economic self-interest via the means of war and torture, by presenting it as moral duty or responsibility to protect. The historian Daniele Ganser calls this ‘soft power’ or the ‘power of interpretation’. Because this power shapes our view of the world, it can make itself disappear.<sup>410</sup> According to him, it is time to become sensitive to the mechanisms of ‘soft power’ and ask how politics actually work in terms of finding reasons for wars like the one that took place in Libya in 2011, or, as mentioned above, the one in Afghanistan. Are we always presented with lies?<sup>411</sup> And what alternatives remain for us?

#### 4.2.2 Deconstructing for a Peace to Come

Appeltshauser does not end her article on a pessimistic note. According to her, to regard violence as pervasively negative is to forget a very important part of differential thought. Violence is not purely negative; it is also productive.<sup>412</sup> Without it – without the determination of things, and thus without the risk to disrespect, or even harm – the world would not be comprehensible to us. All Being would be unthinkable, and we human beings incapable of both intentionality and action.

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<sup>409</sup> See: Appeltshauser, 2014, pp. 4-9

<sup>410</sup> Unlike Polat, I would argue that the liberal peace is not oblivious to structural inequality. The discourse in which it engages more or less deliberately works in favour of naturalising current power-relations, in order to uphold them. (See: Polat, 2010, pp. 335-337)

<sup>411</sup> See for example: Ganser, 2014

<sup>412</sup> See: Appeltshauser, 2014, pp. 16-18

As Derrida argues, we need to speak. Only then can we have a chance at respecting the Other for what he or she is. Derrida thus takes a more pragmatic stance than Lévinas. For him, pure nonviolence – ethical peace – is not possible within the historicity of this world. But it can remain an aim, a *telos*, a guiding light. Always to come hospitality, forgiveness, justice, and ultimately peace in their purity remain ‘unthinkable, unutterable, impossible’. Nonetheless, it is our responsibility to work for them.

One way, we can do this, is by taking on the responsibility of relentless deconstruction. We need to look at texts, at writing, question words and established patches of meaning, so as to expose the hierarchies of conceptual oppositions, without trying to institute yet another fixed and hardened point of view in regards to “how we should think or act”<sup>413</sup>. This is not to say that no approach will ever regain a hegemonic status. Interpretations of ourselves, the world, and ideals concerning the right way to act or construct our social life will continue to manifest. It is the task of deconstruction to remain attentive to their emergence and have the tools to bring the hidden mechanisms of domination to light.<sup>414</sup> Deconstruction, Derrida writes, is justice. But it is a justice never reached. Thus, just like Lévinas, Derrida asks us to embark on a journey into the unknown, without fixed meanings. We, as philosophers, need to be an open question: relentless, but at the same time embracing an attitude of hesitation and humility, led by a deep concern for the safety of the singular Other, even though this singularity can never become consciously named without doing it harm.<sup>415</sup>

Practically, this might mean, first of all, acknowledging that “the political refers to a ‘space of power, conflict and antagonism’ at the core of social interaction”<sup>416</sup>. Derrida does not engage in a discussion on whether the natural state of men is a state of peace or war. In any case, we can never know, because there is always already society. And in it, life simply *is* antagonism and conflict. There are dilemmas, there is discrimination, inclusion and exclusion, etc. An everlasting peaceful condition, as it is envisioned by Kant and ultimately also by the liberal peace, is a peace of the dead. It would harbour neither space nor time, and thus could not tolerate becoming. On the other hand, Polat argues that accepting the conflictual nature of social relations equally harbours the potential for politics to become a “radical and genuinely pluralistic

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<sup>413</sup> Patton, 2007, p. 770

<sup>414</sup> This perhaps is a similar undertaking to the one Michel Foucault introduced as *discourse analysis* which has then been further developed as the *critical discourse analysis method*. (See: Fairclough, 1995, pp. 23-25 & 42-48 & 76-78; Foucault, 1981, pp. 52-53 & 69-76)

<sup>415</sup> See: Reynolds, 2001, pp. 36-51

<sup>416</sup> Polat, 2010, p. 337

democracy”<sup>417</sup>. Because peace always lies in the future – is always to come – it begs for a process of continuous political transformation toward justice as such. Thus, Derrida, like Lévinas, asks ethics to weave itself into politics. Deconstruction intervenes. Demanding it, Derrida makes room for “ethical struggles in the juridical and political spheres [...] through a critique of violence, of the violence of law and its role in justice”<sup>418</sup>. Derrida knows that we cannot overcome this violence. Still, he hopes that embarking on a process of radical democratisation might steer us toward a “promised land of a *post-metaphysical* ethics and politics without adumbrating its geography”<sup>419</sup>.<sup>420</sup> Again, Lévinas and Derrida do not seem to be so far apart. In fact, as I shall elaborate further in the conclusion, their approaches might provide quite a complementary picture on violence and peace.

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<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

<sup>418</sup> Buonamano, 1998, p. 173

<sup>419</sup> Bernstein, 1987, p. 112

<sup>420</sup> See: Buonamo, 1998, pp. 171-176; Patton, 2007, p. 771; Polat, 2010, p. 337

## 5 Conclusion – To Start with ‘Secondly’

In this thesis I set out to analyse the violent and imperial character of the liberal peace from a philosophical perspective. I have argued that the accusations of violence and imperialism, liberal peacebuilding is faced with today cannot be solved by merely choosing a different approach to policy-making. The imperial traits of liberalism are, among other things, the result of deeper-lying assumptions concerning human nature, subjectivity, epistemology and ontology. As guiding research question, I thus asked, how the imperial character of the liberal peace could best be explained with the philosophical approaches of Lévinas and Derrida, and if their approaches might provide us with alternatives for peace. First, I presented the liberal peace both in its self-ascribed glory and in its violent, at times brutal, and in any case imperial and often neo-colonial downside. Second, I introduced the philosophical approaches of Lévinas and Derrida in order to juxtapose them to the discourse of liberal peace.

When considering the approaches of Lévinas and Derrida, it first of all becomes very clear that our understanding of subjectivity, cognition, ontology, etc. has a great influence on the way, we imagine, plan, and implement peace. In my analysis, both Lévinas and Derrida were found to regard the rational subject as a consequence of some kind of relatedness. In Lévinas’ view, the subject emerges from an irreducible relation to the Other. Derrida, on the other hand, stresses that subjectivity is merely an effect of differentiation. It does not own truth. Nor is it absolutely free. The necessity of relation, for subjectivity to evolve, has relevance for peace studies, because peace can no longer be about protecting the illusion of absolute and autonomous freedom. By falsifying the liberal notion of subjectivity, the entire discourse of the liberal peace crumbles.

That is to say, the liberal peace has to declare our state of nature a state of war, because it is based on philosophical approaches that centre around a rational, self-present, but also self-interested subject. In consequence, the liberal peace needs to create a unified society in which the danger of a war of all against all is contained. The social contract is institutionalised in order to appease, to tranquillise, and at the same time control a given population. From a Lévinasian perspective, the liberal peace remains armed because it still operates within *egology*, the realm of the Same. Most problematically, it is a peace concerned with me, my freedom, and my possessions. This concern ultimately institutionalises inequality by legally protecting private property. Imperialism, therefore, is not something accidentally part of the liberal condition. It lies at its heart. Living in the ‘liberal family’, we do not want to see this. Liberalism is presented to us

as the only possible way to shape society in order to reach ever-greater progress. Within the liberal discourse, as I have argued with Derrida, structures of inequality, exploitation and imperialism are reinterpreted in terms of (moral) necessities and thereby made to disappear. The same applies to acts of violence and brutality conducted by liberal states – such as torture or the use of drones.

In sum, Lévinas confirms that imperialism is an inherent aspect of liberal thought and practice. Derrida, on the other hand, is equally aware of the link between liberalism and mechanisms of domination, but he does not regard imperialism as an exclusively liberal trait. To him, it can evolve wherever a particular discourse gains the hegemony of interpretation. Either way, both Lévinas and Derrida demand we scrutinise the liberal discourse in its entirety in order to disclose what lies behind our feelings of victory and superiority. Their approaches attack the liberal peace in its good conscience. They show us that the liberal peace tells our entire story by beginning with ‘secondly’. It declares our state of nature a state of war and thus operates with a very limited view on what it means to be a human being – namely, rational, autonomous, and free. How then, can we, who are no longer fooled by the thought of pure, and self-present rationality, imagine peace?

Lévinas’ and Derrida’s answer would be: We cannot. Peace cannot be thought of. It is not a condition that can be determined and then mechanically engineered from the outside. To find peace, we need to embark on a journey into the unknown, on every level of society. The only thing that can lead us on this road, are an openness to, a deep concern and a responsibility for the Other. This might manifest in an attitude of goodness, humility, hesitation, and simultaneously of informed and constant criticism. Nevertheless, this attitude does not protect us from the fact that, to some extent, we might always fail to protect the singularity of the Other, because there always already is society, the third party, and the violence of history.

Together, the approaches of Lévinas and Derrida concretise this process into the open by addressing three spheres of sociality. In the *sphere of the face-to-face*, which is most discussed by Lévinas, we need to embrace the fact that, even though we see the Other’s suffering, we are not the ones to know best, what he or she needs. It is the Other for whom we are responsible; but it is also the Other who will first demand our help. For peacebuilding, this implies a radical change of approach. Perhaps we need to leave all preconceived notions behind, in order to be able to meet the Other openly and listen to what he or she has to say. In the *discursive sphere*, which is the focus of Derrida, we are asked to deconstruct endlessly every text, every system of meaning,

every written and spoken word in order to detect hierarchies that are hidden by the means of e.g. neutralisation, universalization, objectivation, etc. Peace scholars, too, must remain ever-vigilant to the power of definition, engage in radical self-criticism, and deconstruct the concepts with which they operate – such as the concept of violence. In the *sphere of politics*, we have to leave behind self-interest and, with it, the wish to control and totalise. Instead we should engage in a process of radical democratisation that respects the singularity of every human being, and thus constantly strives for plurality instead of unity.

So far, I have argued that philosophy indeed matters for the study and building of peace. In order to better understand the inherent violent and imperial tendencies of the liberal peace, peace scholars and peacebuilders do well to engage in a critical reconsideration of human nature, the possibility of knowledge, and the character of subjectivity and freedom. To end, however, I would like to turn the tables and ask what philosophy could learn from all this. If peace studies and peacebuilding are a concretisation of philosophical thought, how should philosophy relate to the violence its own basic assumptions create? Perhaps, we, as philosophers, need to ask what our primary intention should be. What is to lead our search for truth and wisdom? Could we conceptualise human nature in a manner that does not corrupt our understanding of the way we comprehend and engage in the world, but still allows us to respect otherness and singularity? Could we not overcome our fear of the ‘malicious demon’ reflected in our failure to fully grasp multiplicity and plurality? Lévinas and Derrida try to do so. Further debates need to follow because, as the initial citation of this thesis states, our indifference to the suffering of the singular Other has the potential to kill. If it is indeed as Derrida says, and we cannot escape history, then let us hope that philosophy will take its part in shaping a future “found in the past’s fugitive moments of compassion rather than in its solid centuries of warfare”<sup>421</sup>.

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<sup>421</sup> Zinn, 2007, p. 12



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<sup>422</sup> FuK is a play with the phonetic meaning of the written word *fuck* – as in “What the fuck?!” –, and the abbreviation of the German name for peace and conflict studies – *Friedens- und Konfliktforschung*.

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## **Declaration Concerning the Safeguarding of Academic Integrity**

I hereby declare that I am aware of and have respected the rules for the safeguarding of academic honesty and integrity, as well as the guidelines for good academic practice throughout the entire thesis at hand.

Bern, 30<sup>th</sup> May 2014

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mirja Bänninger', is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Mirja Bänninger