From Dictatorship to Democracy and Back Again – Refusing Pre-figurative Politics

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Abstract: *This paper joins the debate regarding the efficacy of nonviolent civil resistance theory and practice to overcome the structural violence of contemporary neoliberal capitalism. The post-revolutionary outcomes of Sharpian inspired democracy movements have left many the social and economic grievances that helped fuel them in-tact. Chabot and Sharifi (2013) claim that the reason for this is the emphasis placed on overcoming the direct violence of dictatorships and the absence of a guiding ethical framework in the theory and practice of nonviolent civil resistance. In contrast they argue that protest movements need to be guided by the ethical framework provided by Gandhi's constructive program. Using the lens of psychoanalytic theory, the paper examines both the critique and solution offered by Chabot and Sharifi and subsequently rejects the proposal for Gandhian constructive program. Rather, the paper outlines an alternative politics based upon exclusion and refusal as the only effective means for overcoming the contemporary structural violence of neoliberal capitalism.*

1. Introduction

This paper joins the debate regarding the efficacy of nonviolent civil resistance theory and practice in overcoming the structural violence of neoliberal capitalism. On one-side of this debate are advocates of Sharpian nonviolent civil resistance who argue for a two-step process in which replacing dictatorships with liberal-democracies is a necessary if not sufficient step in achieving emancipation from the structural violence of neoliberal capitalism. On the other side of the debate are critics of Sharpian nonviolence who argue against a two-step process in favour of seeing protest movements as a process for building an alternative society to

neoliberal capitalism. Such an approach, these critics argue, is consistent with Gandhi's constructive program rather than the narrow focus on Sharpian civil disobedience. This paper argues that the approaches advocated by both sides of the debate are unable to transform the structural violence of neoliberal capitalist democracy. Using the lens of psychoanalytic theory, in particular the version of it developed by Slavoj Zizek (e.g. Zizek 1989, 2006, 2014) the paper discusses the limitations of both sides of the debate, and in particular the appeals made to democratic ideals of inclusion, participation, diversity and horizontal power, and considers an alternative approach to social and political transformation grounded in exclusion and refusal.

2. The limitations of nonviolent civil resistance

The movements consisting of the Colour Revolutions and the Arab Spring are what is sometimes referred to as 'nonviolent civil resistance', following from the theory of Gene Sharp and his contemporaries that helped inspire them. Although often cited as successful 'democracy movements' against dictatorships, they have come under criticism for reinforcing the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism (e.g., see Chabot & Sharifi 2013; Wahlberg 2011; Beehner 2011). For example, Beehner (2011) argues that the Ukrainian people, 'once the upstart darlings of pro-revolutionary visionaries the world over' just a decade later faced the same problems they struggled against, including corruption and socio-economic inequities. Indeed, in 2011, less than ten years after the revolution, Freedom House downgraded the Ukraine from "Free" to "Partly Free"[1]. The "revolutions" in Georgia, Serbia, and Kyrgyzstan ended in a similar way with corruption and socio-economic inequities persisting. Wahlberg (2011) claims that 'The results of Otpor-inspired revolutions have been mixed to say the least' and that of the more than fifty countries that have received training from Otpor, 'The only attributable 'successes' until Egypt were in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005) – the so called colour

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[1] http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline_images/98.pdf

revolutions, all of which have been a bitter disappointment'. Indeed, to drive home this point, Wahlberg (2011) highlights that 'as Egyptians massed in Tahrir Square, on 5 February 2011, 70,000 Serbs marched in Belgrade protesting unemployment and poverty'.

The same failures have been reported in reference to the group of movements known as the Arab Spring. Chabot and Sharifi (2013, p. 1-2), in reflecting on their hope and excitement of the spectacular events of the Arab Spring, write, 'We feared promising manifestations of nonviolence would end up reproducing various structures and forms of *violence.* Unfortunately we were mostly right in both cases*'*. Egypt's women learned this painful lesson in the wake of the 18 days in Tahrir Square. One female protestor commented, 'Those 18 days in Tahrir Square were utopian, but now there's a lot of work to do in an ugly reality' (Sussman 2011). Whereas during the revolution, women were able to fully participate, have their voices heard, and all without any sexual related violence, this 'freedom' has now all but disappeared in 'post-revolution' Egypt (Sussman 2011). Sussman (2011) observes, 'As the political space narrows [from 3 ministers under Mubarak to 1 now] the physical space for women to assert themselves is also shrinking', citing the violent turn during a march on International Women's Day, just 2 months later, where women were arrested, beaten and verbally abused.

Other forms of socio-economic violence have persisted in the wake of civil resistance movements in the Middle East. For example, regarding the Green Movement in Iran in 2009, 'Four years later, the people's demands have not been met while poverty, social suffering, and political divisions continue to grow' (Chabot and Sharifi 2013, p. 2). Regarding the Egyptian Arab Spring movement of 2011, 'the Egyptian people's demands for bread, dignity, social equality, and state accountability have still not been met, despite the billions of dollars in U.S. aid and IMF loans received by the new regime' (Prashad 2012). Noting the differential outcomes of the two movements (in Iran Ahmadenajad remained, in Egypt Mubarak was

toppled), Chabot & Sharifi (2013, p. 3) nonetheless claim, 'Even the successful removal of a dictator has not significantly reduced the myriad forms of violence suffered by the majority of Egyptian people, especially by the most oppressed among them'. In taking a broader view of struggles for democracy, Vinthagen (2014, p. 1) observes,

In Kyrgyzstan the old elite seem to keep hold by exchanging the persons in power. In Eastern Europe the people gained political freedom but lacks the social security they had during the communist era, and now neofascists and the extreme right are gaining popular support. In South Africa the fall of the racist apartheid regime was indeed a success. The political revolution did produce a different society with universal suffrage, increased media freedoms and a rule of law, but at the same time, the economic and social inequality is in many ways even worse than before. The ANC turned into a neoliberal and market friendly party, and the poor black majority that were the backbone of the struggle against apartheid are still waiting for the change.

Therefore, although experiences of social inequality and exclusion may have fuelled nonviolent civil resistance movements, the outcomes of such movements seem to have at best left this structural violence untouched, and at worst exacerbated it; all in the name of 'democracy'.

Before examining the underlying reasons suggested for these failures, it is worth pointing out that contemporary proponents of nonviolent civil resistance often counter such critiques by emphasising that the theory never intended to address all forms of violence. For example, nonviolent civil resistance scholar Maciej Bartkowski (2013, italics added) argues, 'Indeed, we can criticize a Sharpian approach...but I am not sure if there are grounds for criticizing a Sharpian approach for something *it did not really aim to address to begin with - namely, the elimination of all forms of violence'*. However, in contrast to Bartkowski, other nonviolent civil

resistance scholars have recently suggested that civil resistance does have applicability beyond regime change. For example, Stephen Zunes (2014, p. 93) argues,

While much of the attention on the power of strategic nonviolent action has focused on pro-democracy struggles against dictatorships, the power of such movements has more radical implications. More so than the often romanticized armed struggle, nonviolent action has shown itself to be a powerful tool in anti-imperialist struggles.

Similarly, in a 2012 interview, Erica Chenoweth commented that although she has not studied the effects of nonviolent actions on economic issues, such as inequality or poverty,

There is no reason to think that the same principles don't apply. Other scholars have written extensively about ways to deny corrupt corporate interests the means to continue exploiting others. The primary challenge is to identify the pillars of support that the oppressive system requires for its functioning, and to apply sufficient pressure to those pillars to shift the status quo (Stoner 2012, italics added).

Underpinning such claims is a liberal-democratic reformist approach to social change. For example, Zunes claims that the establishment of a liberal democratic system is often a necessary *if not sufficient* means of bringing justice to the oppressed. In response to an online article[1] in 2008, Zunes argued,

Liberal democracy (even the messy kind which often follows many years of corrupt authoritarian rule) may be a necessary if not sufficient step towards a just society, providing the political space for organizing radical nonviolent action and thereby eventually allowing for a genuinely revolutionary transformation which may not have been possible under the previous autocratic system.

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[1]See: http://www.wri-irg.org/node/6258

Similarly, Bartkowski (2013, italics added) argues,

On the very basic level the goal of a strategic nonviolent conflict is to shift political power not to eliminate violence - though the latter might decrease with the power shift (like it eventually happened in Chile, Poland or Serbia). By shifting political power away from seemingly powerful to seemingly powerless the transformation of the society and polity occurs at a particular point in time. The sustenance of that transformation (or power shift) is then the key issue in the fight against structural violence. I think this in turn depends - *as successful democratizations show - on the continued participation of the society;* on the high level of disciplined rebellious mobilization that the society is able to summon after a dictator/regime is gone *with the purpose of fighting new or old ills that transpire during ongoing social and economic transformation.*

Therefore, for Bartkowski, Zunes and Chenoweth it is the liberal-democratic shift in power produced by nonviolent civil resistance that will provide the necessary conditions for overcoming structural violence. It is in this way that Braatz (2014, p. 7) asserts, 'A typical strategic nonviolence campaign is reformist – seeking to clean up the state and make government less corrupt and less repressive as well as more responsive to the needs of people'. Thus advocates of nonviolent civil resistance view the transformation of structural violence as a 'two-step' process in which the first 'non-negotiable' step is the installation of liberal-democracy.

3. Being the change you wish to see

It is precisely this "two-step" process that Chabot and Sharifi (2013) argue against. Rather, they argue that nonviolent movements should experiment in Gandhian 'constructive programme' in order to create alternatives to neoliberal-capitalism. They conclude that in contrast to a Sharpian approach, the protestors in the Arab Spring needed 'to confront "the intimate enemy" infecting individual

psyches and social interactions, and to experiment with alternative ways of life untainted by the dominant imperial mentality, not just to undermine tyrannical leaders and states' (Chabot and Sharifi 2013, p. 4). How are we to understand the challenge of confronting 'the intimate enemy infecting individual psyches and social interactions'? How are we to define the 'intimate enemy'? Chabot and Sharifi (2013) are not explicit in elaborating on this point. However, they do make the observation that the outcomes of recent nonviolent civil resistance movements were already pre-determined by liberal democratic capitalism. For example, they outline how the manifestos of the Green Movement in Iran were based on liberal-democratic capitalist discourse. Similarly, despite recognizing the difficult path ahead following the fall of Mubarak, the April 6 Youth Movement in Egypt nonetheless was unable to conceive of any other way forward than liberal, parliamentary democracy (Chabot and Sharifi 2013). Chabot and Sharifi (2013) argue that certain intellectuals' visions for a post dictator world closely resembled conceptions of 'freedom' associated with Freedom House. Indeed, evidence indicates that ex-Freedom House Director, Peter Ackerman, attended training seminars in Iran for activists and protestors (Chabot & Sharifi 2013). In this way, certain expertise was mobilized to ensure that any outcome of the revolution would be consistent with 'a desire for the West' (Badiou 2012). Chabot and Sharifi (2013, p. 21) thus conclude, 'Tragically, the majority of Egypt's population seems to have accepted that there is no alternative to neoliberal forms of freedom and democracy'.

More generally in relation to the theory and practice of nonviolent civil resistance, Chabot and Sharifi (2013) suggest two reasons for the failures of such movements: (i) an emphasis on direct physical violence; and (ii) the absence of a guiding ethical framework for constructing alternatives to neoliberal capitalism. Regarding the first point, the emphasis placed on direct over indirect forms of violence, leads to protestors targeting 'direct and visible violence as personified by their political leaders…and institutionalized in their authoritarian regimes' (Chabot & Sharifi 2013, p. 22). Therefore, 'In

doing so, they pay insufficient attention to more subtle forms of violence within these nonviolent social movements and to visible as well as invisible violence in their aftermath, both in the past and present' (Chabot & Charifi 2013, p. 3). Similarly, Martin (1999, 288) suggests that the 'central preoccupation of writing on nonviolence is with systems involving direct use of violence, including dictatorship, war, and genocide' rather than on overcoming structural forms of violence associated with capitalism. The reason for this is because such movements 'have ignored Gandhi's warning against removing "the tiger" without addressing and creating alternatives to "the tiger's nature", and consequently have been unable to move beyond the violence of nonviolence' (Chabot and Sharifi 2013, p. 22).

Supporting this argument is that nonviolent civil resistance theory, through its emphasis on pragmatics and the removal of dictators, is void of any ethical framework for guiding the post-revolutionary society. As the Chabot and Sharifi (2013, p. 219) write, Sharp's theory 'perceives nonviolence as an instrumental strategy for beating oppressive authorities, not as a holistic political ethics for bridging divides or transforming relationships'. In contrast, the ethics underpinning constructive program is one of a 'radical vision of democracy, promoting a popular participation and the common good' (Chabot and Sharifi 2013, p. 214). Therefore, in explaining the failures of the Arab Spring movements to remove themselves from the straightjacket of neoliberal capitalism, Chabot and Sharifi (2013, p. 226) conclude, 'the main reason for the tragic outcomes of these movements is that their participants and advocates primarily relied on Sharpian political realism instead of experimenting with Gandhian political ethics'. The following two sections examine and interpret these claims from the perspective of psychoanalytic theory.

4. Ideological fantasy and the metonymy of dictatorships

The critique of Sharpian nonviolence based upon the emphasis on the direct physical violence can be understood through the

psychoanalytic concept of ideological fantasy. Traditionally ideology is understood from the Marxian perspective of false consciousness and the advent of post-structuralism led to claims that we live in a post-ideological world. However, psychoanalytic philosopher Slavoj Zizek (1989) has advanced the conceptualisation of ideology such that ideology critique is once again at the forefront of radical politics. In contrast to Marxian false consciousness in which people do not have awareness of their actions in support of the dominating power, Zizek claims ideology functions in the manner of 'I know very well, but nonetheless I am doing it'. The basic structure of this function of ideology is known as the 'fetishist disavowal'.

The role of ideological fantasy is to enable us to deal with the incompleteness of society, or its failure to provide what it promises to. Commonly, this function is linked to the fantasy of a utopian fullness, that is, a society without antagonism. In this context of this paper, this utopian fullness would be the belief as expressed by Zunes that liberal-democratic capitalism is sufficient for bringing about a fair and equal society. However, as the discussion in the first section highlights, the outcomes of mass protest movements has proven otherwise. Therefore, ideological fantasy attempts to deal with this trauma by masking this lack in symbolic reality itself (Stavrakakis 1999). It is important to point out here that 'fantasy is not the opposite of reality but, rather, the dimension that sustains it' (Newman 2004, p. 163). As Zizek (1989, p. 21) comments, 'Ideology is not simply "false consciousness", an illusory representation of reality, it is rather this reality itself which is already to be conceived as ideological'. Furthermore, 'In political terms, this means that there is a gap in social representation itself. The role of ideology is to cover over, to patch up this void – to sustain the fantasy of fullness and wholeness' (Newman 2004, p. 163). More specifically, ideological fantasy functions by positing 'others' as the reason for our inability to fully realise society. This can be seen in the earlier quote by Chenoweth that once a dictator has been toppled and liberal-democracy ushered in, the task shifts to denying those who seek to corrupt the system.

However, post-structural thinking has challenged the notion of a full society. In particular, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) assert the impossibility of society, that is, that any notion of society (whether liberal democratic, socialist or otherwise) is always incomplete based upon a fundamental antagonism. From this perspective, the role of ideology critique is to refuse the lure of the fullness of society and to accept the impossibility of this fullness. That is, if the role of fantasy is to sustain the belief in the fullness of society, then once one accepts that this fullness is impossible one is able to overcome ideological fantasy. However this perspective has come under critique. For example, in response to Laclau's notion of the impossible fullness of Society, Zizek (2000, p. 100-101) argues,

My conclusion would thus be to emphasize that the impossibility at work in Laclau's notion of antagonism is double: not only does 'radical antagonism' mean that it is impossible adequately to represent/articulate the fullness of Society – on an even more radical level, it is also impossible adequately to represent/articulate this very antagonism/negativity that prevents Society from achieving its full ontological realization. This means that ideological fantasy is not simply the fantasy of the impossible fullness of Society: not only is Society impossible, this impossibility itself is distortedly represented-positivised within an ideological field – that is the role of ideological fantasy (say the Jewish plot). When this very impossibility is represented in a positive element, inherent impossibility is changed into external obstacle. Ideology is also the name for the guarantee that the negativity which prevents Society from achieving its fullness does actually exist, that it has a positive existence in the guise of a big Other who pulls the strings of social life.

Thus whereas for Laclau the challenge is to resist locating the absence of fullness in some 'other' and accept the impossibility of society, for Zizek it is not that the one blames the obstacle for preventing the realisation of the fantasy of fullness, but rather that

the fantasy object is presented as the obstacle preventing the openness of society. The shift made here is that instead of the other blocking full access to enjoyment or society's full success, the other blocks the awareness of society's failures. To return to Chenoweth, the issue isn't that corrupt interests prevent the neoliberal capitalist system from functioning equally and justly, but rather that corrupt interests are posited by Sharpian advocates *to prevent us from seeing the failures of the system itself*. In short, ideological fantasy ensures that the problem is never the system but rather those who seek to corrupt it.

Supporting this ideological operation in Sharpian theory is an unacknowledged influence of a liberal model of power. A key part of Sharp's work was a shift in the way we perceive power, from monolithic to plural and dispersed throughout society. However, despite the pluralising of power, it nonetheless still operates in a one-dimensional way; that is, all roads lead back to the dictator through pillars of support so that the dictator's power is not simply his or hers, but rather is supported by various institutions, the security forces and so-on. In this way, it is the authority bestowed upon the dictator through his or her symbolic position that provides power. Once this authority is removed, the dictator loses his or her power. Therefore the struggle against dictatorship is a struggle over the symbolic site of power.

It is in this way that Sharp's model of power is synergistic with Claude Lefort's (1988) concept of liberal power. Lefort (1988) claims that the form of power underpinning modern democracy exists as an empty place of power. That is,

The modern democratic symbolic order did not appear ex nihilo, but rather developed from the decline of the ancient regime. Similarly, the place of power did not just appear as empty, but rather remained as empty – it was emptied as the regime fell (Roess 2012, p. 180-81).

Thus from this perspective, power exists a-priori as an empty place that until the advent of democracy was occupied by some form of 'power holder'. The advent of democracy was therefore able to restore the empty place of power, and the ongoing task is to ensure that this place of power remains free from illegitimate appropriation. As Zizek (2008a, p. 267) explains,

Lefort's fundamental thesis – which has today already acquired the status of a commonplace – is that with the advent of the "democratic invention", the locus of Power becomes an empty place…In pre-democratic societies, there is always a legitimate pretender to the place of Power, somebody who is fully entitled to occupy it, and the one who violently overthrows him has simply the status of a usurper, whereas within the democratic horizon, everyone who occupies the locus of power is by definition a usurper.

Is this not the precise logic of nonviolent civil resistance theory and its emphasis on the democratic shift of power? That the overthrowing of a dictator empties the place of power thereby allowing for the legitimate exercise of power through participation in democratic institutions and processes such as free and fair elections? And that, therefore, the task of civil resistance once the dictator falls is to protect this empty place of power from being illegitimately claimed in a manner that prevents freedom and autonomy (whether by a military dictator, a corrupt official or a greedy banker)? However, the critical point to identify here is that Lefort's empty place of power fails to take into consideration its own performative dimension. As Zizek (2008a, p. 276) explains further,

The fundamental operation of the 'democratic invention' is thus of a purely symbolic nature: it is misleading to say that the 'democratic invention' finds the locus of power empty – the point is rather that it constitutes, constructs it as empty; that reinterprets the 'empirical' fact of interregnum into a 'transcendental' condition of the legitimate exercise of power'.

To link this back to the discussion on ideological fantasy then, the empty place of power is the positive existence of the structural antagonism at the heart of neoliberal capitalism. More specifically, the positing of the empty place of power masks the antagonism at the heart of liberal-democratic capitalism and acts as a fantasy screen upon which potential usurpers of power are projected. This understanding of power helps us to identify how one can perform the task suggested by Chabot and Sharifi (2013) of confronting 'the intimate enemy infecting individual psyches and social interactions' and confronting the tiger's nature. In psychoanalytic terms, one must 'traverse the fantasy', which is to accept that the metonymic others (i.e., usurpers of power) are posited by oneself as a means to compensate for the experienced trauma of the impossibility of society. By refusing to posit various others as the reason for the failures of neoliberal capitalism we can begin to confront the empty place of power and acknowledge the void that lays behind it. That is, the tiger's nature is shown to be nothing but a paper tiger.

5. The Discourse of the University and the Hidden Ethical Framework

The second criticism aimed at the theory and practice of nonviolent civil resistance by Chabot and Sharifi (2013) is that the former's emphasis on pragmatics and the removal of dictators stems from the fact that it is void of any ethical framework for guiding the post-revolutionary society. The position taken in this paper is that such claims are inaccurate and that Sharpian nonviolent politics is very much underpinned by neoliberal capitalist ethics. That is, it is not that the absence of a guiding ethical framework allows neoliberal capitalism to simply step in to fill this absence, but rather that Sharpian nonviolence theory is precisely in the service of neoliberal capitalism. This point can be explained through reference to Lacan's four discourses of psychoanalysis.

Lacan uses the term 'discourse' to "emphasize the trans-individual nature of language, the fact that speech always implied another subject, an interlocutor" ("Discourse" 2008). Lacan's four

discourses of psychoanalysis are a way of articulating different subjective positions within a discursive social link, which logically follow from the formula of the signifier (Zizek 1998), the latter of which Lacan developed based on his reading of Saussurean semiotics. There are four discourses of psychoanalysis: master, university, hysteric and analyst. The differing social effects produced by the four discourses result from four major factors involved in the production and reception of any discourse (Bracher 1993). These four factors are, (1) master signifiers (S1); (2) the network of signifiers or system of knowledge (S2); (3) the Real that is simultaneously excluded and produced by the system of knowledge and its master signifiers (a); and, (4) the divided subject ($), split between the identity to which is it interpellated by S1 and the surplus (a) that it sacrifices in assuming that identity (Bracher 1993, 53). These four factors occupy different positions within the basic structure depending on the particular discourse. For example, the discourse of the Master is depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Discourse of the Master

$$S1 \qquad S2$$
$$--- \qquad ---$$
$$\$ \qquad a$$

In this figure, the Master-Signifier (S1) occupies the place of the 'agent' which is that of the Master who conveys a message (a discourse) to others; the object 'a' occupies the place of 'production', which is that of the excess of the process of symbolization; the subject ($) is in the position of truth; and knowledge (S2) is the other. As Zizek (1998a, p. 75) outlines, it is on

the basis of the discourse of the Master, one can then proceed to generate the three other discourses by way of successfully putting the other three elements at the place of the Master: in the university discourse, it is Knowledge that occupies the agent's (master's) place,

turning the subject ($) into that which is 'produced', into its unassimilable excess-remainder; in hysteria, the true 'master', the agent who effectively terrorizes the Master himself, is the hysterical subject with her incessant questioning of the Master's position…

The claim being made here is that Sharpian nonviolence operates via the discursive structure of the discourse of the University. The agent of the discourse of the University (figure 2) is knowledge that is addressed to the leftover surplus of the Master discourse. Bracher (1993) uses the literal example of how university students are in the position of 'a', as the receivers of a system of knowledge. The result of this is that we are produced as alienated subjects ($) of this system. The term 'alienation' in Lacanian psychoanalysis refers to the way the 'big Other' (Lacanian term for master signifier (S1) or dominant discourse) speaks for the subject, the way the subject never fully controls the effects of his acts (Zizek 2012). In this way, Bracher (1993, p. 56) argues that when a subject aims to master a knowledge system, whether that knowledge system is the dominant one, or one that is different (e.g., written from the margins of the dominant system based on gender, race etc), 'the student remains subordinated to a system of knowledge/belief, with 'master of' (read: mastery by) the system being taken as an end in itself rather than as a means to benefit either individual subjects or society in general'. Thus, Zizek (1991, p. 130-131) argues, 'This is the elementary logic of the pedagogical process: out of an untamed object, we produce a subject by means of an implantation of knowledge. The "repressed" truth of this discourse is that behind the semblance of neutral "knowledge" that we try to impart on the other, we can always locate the gesture of the master'. The latter part of this comment refers to the S1 in the position of truth in the University discourse. Therefore, the discourse of the University serves to propagate the master signifier(s) upon which it is surreptitiously based (Bracher 1993). What is concealed in the university discourse is the series of power-relations (from the active role of the state apparatuses to ideological beliefs; Zizek 1998a).

Figure 2: Discourse of the University

$$\frac{S2}{S1} \qquad \frac{a}{\$}$$

Sharp's theory of nonviolent politics can be understood in the same manner. That is, that it is a pragmatic (S2) approach in which protestors (a) can learn to apply a range of tactics for overthrowing dictatorships which is nonetheless underpinned by a neoliberal capitalist master. Although it appears as a neutral approach to overthrowing authoritarian power, what remains hidden from this pragmatic approach is the way that the protestors are alienated from the master on whose behalf they are acting. As stated earlier, the master underpinning Sharpian nonviolent civil resistance is neoliberal capitalism. Therefore, according to Lacan (cited in Bracher 1993), the first step towards opposing and transforming the discourse of the University is to expose the master signifiers that clandestinely dominate and underpin the apparently neutral workings of knowledge. It is from the position of the discourse of the Master that one can begin the work of ideology critique in order to unmask the fantasies that support master signifiers (Bracher 1993). It is at this point then that we find ourselves back at the beginning of the previous section on ideological fantasy. By asserting the determining power of neoliberal capitalism on nonviolent civil resistance theory and practice, we are in a position to be able to critique the way ideological fantasy works to keep us resisting in support of this same power, and more importantly, begin to devise more effective forms of resistance.

6. Gandhian Constructive Program and the limits of pre-figuration

The preceding two sections apply a psychoanalytic theoretical approach to the two key points of critique of Sharpian nonviolence offered by Chabot and Sharifi (2013) and in doing so deepen this analysis and open up possibilities for rethinking resistance. This section utilises the same theoretical approach to examine the alternative solution offered by Chabot and Sharifi (2013) based upon the Gandhian ethic of constructive program. To recap, Chabot and Sharifi's solution is based upon (a) the fact that an emphasis on dictators misses the underlying system violence of neoliberal capitalism, and (b) the absence of an ethical framework for guiding the post-revolutionary society leaves protest movements open to appropriation by neoliberal capitalism. By emphasising Gandhian constructive program, they argue, the protestors will address both concerns by having a guiding ethical framework for creating an alternative system to neoliberal capitalism.

This paper argues that the solution offered by Chabot and Sharifi nonetheless fails to overcome the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism. Returning to the four discourses of psychoanalysis, Bracher (1993, p. 78) explains, 'merely asserting a new system of knowledge or belief (the discourse of the University, which promotes S2) or insisting on new ideals or values (the discourse of the Master asserting S1) or lamenting or protesting the current state of affairs (the discourse of the Hysteric, asserting $) often has little effect'. Therefore, simply replacing one ethical framework with another fails to achieve the desired transformation. The key to understanding this point rests on the recognition of the function of the small 'a' which, in the context of this paper, represents the structural inequalities and exploitation of neoliberal capitalism.

The discursive structure which puts the small 'a' in the position of the agent is the discourse of the analyst (see figure 3). The analyst identifies him or herself directly with the excess of the master discourse, thereby standing for the ultimate inconsistency and failure

of the big Other, or for the symbolic order's inability to guarantee the subject's symbolic identity. Or in other words, standing for the failure of neoliberal capitalism to provide the equality and justice sought after by the protestors. From this position, the analyst addresses the split subject, refusing to provide to the latter's demands for a new Master as in the discourse of the Hysteric. Rather, by maintaining this position, what is produced in the discourse of the Analyst is a new master signifier posited by the analysand himself. As Bracher (1993, 68) suggests, 'It is only from the discourse of the Analyst...that the subject is in a position to assume its own alienation and desire and, on the basis of that assumption, separate from the given master signifiers and produce its own new master signifiers'. Therefore, Bracher (1993, 68) continues, 'It is thus the discourse of the Analyst which, according to Lacan, offers the most effective means of achieving social change by countering the psychological and social tyranny exercised through language'.

Figure 3: The Discourse of the Analyst

$$\frac{a}{S2} \qquad \frac{\$}{S1}$$

In effect, by simply replacing a Sharpian ethic with a Gandhian one, Chabot and Sharifi proceed too quickly by covering over the small 'a', and therefore the revolutionary potential that exists in the protest movement. A key reason for this is the temptation provided by the logic of pre-figuration that underpins their claims to constructive program. Simply put, pre-figuration is when the methods of action anticipate or replicate in advance the desired goal (Martin 2008). Therefore,

"if the goal is a society without organized violence, nonviolent action has all these prefigurative advantages. It provides experiences in living without using violence; it reduces immediate violence in the

here and now, even when campaigns fail; and it ensures that efforts are in a nonviolent direction" (Martin 2008, 5).

This logic of pre-figuration cuts across both sides of the debate: that is, both advocates of Sharpian nonviolence and its detractors both agree on the logic of pre-figuration. For example, Chenoweth and Stephan's (2011) argument that nonviolent revolutions are more likely to lead to non-violent democratic outcomes when compared to violent movements is based upon the conclusion that broad based participation during the nonviolent campaigns is important for reinforcing a 'peaceful' post-revolutionary liberal-democratic society. Similarly, claim Chabot and Sharifi (2013, p. 217) claim, 'Cairo's Tahrir Square created autonomous public spaces where Gandhi's notions of *satygraha and swaraj* infused ways of life for several months'. To support this claim, they quote an Egyptian activist who suggests that Tahrir Square 'was really a mini-example of what democracy looks like…It was a mirror of what Egypt would look like if it was democratic' (Chabot & Sharifi 2013, p. 217).

A number of social movement scholars argue that prefiguration is the most strategic and effective means for bringing about the transformation of capitalist society (e.g. Maekelbergh 2011; Springer 2015). A key aspect of pre-figurative politics is that it rejects the idea of the two-step process based on the removal of unjust power that then enables the space for the creation of a new society. For example, Maeckelbergh (2011) discusses how prefiguration captures the shift in focus of social movements away from a conquering of the society towards the *process* of building something new. In this way, she claims, pre-figuration is about creating change by *doing*. The fundamental principles of this pre-figurative politics are inclusion, participation and diversity supported by a horizontal power structure. For example, Maekelbergh (2011) argues that the aim of pre-figurative politics is to create more inclusive forms of democracy that directly challenge liberal-representative democracy. She claims, 'This deep and open inclusion is achieved through connectivity,

where connectivity is communication characterized by reciprocal contamination' (Maekelbergh 2011, p. 14).

However, in the same way that positing the empty place of power covers over the excess of neoliberalism thereby enabling resistance to potential usurpers of power, so too does the positing of a pre-figurative, horizontal space of common humanity cover over the excess in favour of inclusiveness. For example, Jodi Dean (2016) observes that today nation-states exercise power as democracies and that crowds of protestors actually disrupt this democratic power. A democratic reading of the crowd or protest blocks or displaces this rupture by harnessing it in the service of the very setting it aimed to disrupt. This covering over of the excess by the positing of a pre-figurative space of democratic participation is supported by the ethical frame of the 'common good' advocated by Chabot and Sharifi (2013). For example, Wendy Brown (2004, p. 453) argues that such an emphasis on our common humanity 'presents itself as something of an antipolitics – a pure defense of the individual against immense and potentially cruel or despotic machineries of culture, state, war, ethnic conflict, tribalism, patriarchy and other mobilizations or instantiations of collective power against individuals'. The result of this anti-politics is the prohibition of asserting a collective emancipatory political project in favor of reconciling horizontal differences.

To be clear, inclusive participation is of critical importance during revolutionary campaigns and the role of building unity for a successful revolutionary movement is unequivocal across the theoretical spectrum of revolutionary politics. For example, Merriman (2010) identifies unity as one of the essential strategies of nonviolent civil resistance movements. Badiou (2012) argues that unity or intensification is necessary for moving from localised riots to an historical riot. Additionally, Arditi (2007) claims it is necessary for building what Kant called 'enthusiasm' for political change. However, there are limits to inclusive participation and diversity and this limit comes into focus precisely at the moment of 'the day after'

the revolution. That is at the moment when one argues for pre-figuration based on the empirical or ethical fact of inclusive participation.

For example, Badiou (2012, 46) argues that the opening created by the revolutionary moment 'does not by itself offer any alternative to the power it intends to overthrow'. Rather, Badiou (2012, p. 109) claims,

The event [historical riot] is the abrupt creation not of a new reality, but of a myriad of new possibilities. None of them is a repetition of what is already known. That is why it is obscurantist to say 'this movement is demanding democracy' (meaning the kind we enjoy in the West).

Similarly, Jodi Dean (2016) writes that although many observers of protest movements claim the crowd for democracy, such protests exceed democracy. She argues, 'the democratic reading of the crowd blocks these changes from view. It harnesses the crowd in the service of the very setting that the crowd disrupts' (Dean 2016, p. 7). Placing a different emphasis on 'prefiguration', Dean (2016, p. 124) writes 'the crowd prefigures a collective, egalitarian possibility – but 'prefigures' in a completely literal way: "prior to figuration"'. Therefore rather than the crowd inherently reflecting the politics of democracy, the crowd only opens up the possibility for politics (Dean 2016).

The point to reiterate here is that we must refuse to give meaning to the revolutionary opening based upon any pre-determined ethical frame, and rather insist on its indeterminacy. Such a gesture is exemplified in the work of Ilan rua Wall (2011) who provides an alternative explanation of the Arab Spring - in particular the case of Tunisia from December 2010 to March 2011. The critical question for rua Wall then is how did Tunisian society create a rupture within the seemingly normal run of things? For rua Wall (2011, p. 8, italics added), the answer relates to 'two aspects of the revolt that have been largely overlooked, and which I suggest are crucial: *refusal and*

suspension'. Whilst one of the central slogans of the protestors in Tunisia was 'go away' or 'get out', rua Wall (2011) claims this was not simply targeted at Ali himself, but was a refusal of the situation as a whole. Further, rua Wall (2011, p. 8) describes how, 'a rejection of the situation as a whole is at once too broad to be a 'political demand' and too indeterminate to be a clear critique. As such, there was no immediate content to this refusal.' Therefore, as opposed to Chabot and Sharifi (2013) who emphasise a clear pre-determining ethic to guide the post-revolutionary society, rua Wall's analysis emphasises a refusal of such a move and an emphasis on the suspension of both dominating power and alternative ethical frames.

Crucially, this indeterminateness or silence of the rupture meant that the Ali regime or his successors could not gain purchase, they could not deploy the existing narrative or triangulate with the protestors because all they were faced with was a refusal (rua Wall 2011). In response, the only option Ali had was to use security forces to violently include the protestors (rua Wall 2011). Thus, in the face of such coercion the task becomes one of defending the deafening silence of the refusal against reappropriation. Or in other words, one must maintain ethical autonomy in order for the movement to neither be already spoken for nor appropriated by counter-revolutionary forces; and, that this autonomy is located in the excess of power located within the protest movement. This 'ethics of silence' is best captured in a speech by Zizek (2012, p. 1006) to the Occupy Wall Street movement in New York in which he claimed, 'All we say now can be taken (recuperated) from us – everything except our silence. This silence, this rejection of dialogue, of all forms of clinching, is our "terror", ominous and threatening as it should be'.

7. A Politics of Doing Nothing

Therefore, against a 'politics of doing' based upon prefiguration, inclusive participation and horizontal power relations and supported by a Gandhian ideological frame of the 'common good', this paper argues that what is required to transform the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism is a 'politics of doing nothing' that advocates for

withdrawal and a refusal of any pre-determined ethical frame in a partisan stance with the excess or exclusion produced by neoliberal capitalism. While an in-depth explication of this politics is not possible within the space of this paper, I will conclude by outlining some of its basic contours as explained and developed by Zizek (2006, 2009). Before doing so, it must be emphasised that the politics of doing nothing advocated here is not the same as Sharpian civil disobedience. As discuss above, Sharpian civil disobedience is based upon a particular mode of ideological fantasy whereas the politics of doing nothing is aimed precisely at traversing that fantasy.

At various points throughout his extensive work, Zizek (2006, 2009a, 2012) advocates for a politics of subtraction or 'Bartleby Politics'. The term 'Bartleby' is derived from Herman Melville's (1853) short story titled 'Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-street' in which the main character, Bartleby, repeatedly responds to the demands of his boss with the statement 'I'd prefer not to'. Such a gesture is that described earlier by rua Wall as refusal of the situation as a whole. For Zizek, this Bartleby gesture of refusal typifies his politics of withdrawal. The subversive nature of Bartleby's gesture – by claiming 'I prefer not to', he is not committed to something else but rather he is only committed to 'not to'. As Deleuze (1997) puts it, the abrupt termination, NOT TO…leaves what it rejects undetermined. Thus, Dean (2006: 131) argues "In a way, Bartleby is less an alternative than he is a realization, an acknowledgment of the contemporary political-economic impasse". Further, Dean (2006: 22) suggests,

"The potential of this figure rests in the way that it reverses the standard notion of the subject as active and the object as passive. Having shown that the subject is fundamentally passive, one who submits, who is subjected, Žižek considers the way that the object objects, disturbing the established order of things. Bartleby's inert refusal thus suggests the movement of an object, an objection to capitalist activity and circulation and to liberal fantasies of freedom".

Therefore Žižek's Bartleby politics is not simply about 'doing nothing' as we commonly understand it. Rather, it signifies a refusal to 'do nothing' in the guise of radical acts of resistance, as well as a refusal to take a cynical distance from the Law/Power; rather it breaks free from the cycle of guilt and occupies Power's inner void. Or in other words Bartelby's gesture of refusal can be seen as not just a negation of the explicit demands of power, but also a refusal to partake in acts of resistance/transgression that only serve to reinforce power. As Zizek (2006, p. 393) argues,

This is how we pass from the politics of 'resistance' or 'protestation', which parasitizes upon what it negates, to a politics which opens up a new space outside the hegemonic position and its negation...This is the gesture of subtraction at its purest, the reduction of all qualitative differences to a purely formal minimal difference.

It is the subversive nature of this gesture of 'doing nothing' that leads Zizek (2009b, p. 334) to claim that 'The threat today is not passivity but pseudo-activity, the urge to "be active", to "participate", to mask the Nothingness of what goes on'. Further, he claims, 'Those in power often prefer even a critical participation, a dialogue, to silence – just to engage us in a "dialogue", to make sure our ominous passivity is broken' (Zizek 2009c, 334). Therefore the key challenge for overcoming neoliberal-capitalist democracy is to resist the way the latter interpellates us to resist though greater participation and voice. Or as Zizek (2008, 309) puts it, 'It is better to do nothing than to contribute to the invention of formal ways of rendering visible that which Empire already recognizes as existent'. Recently, Žižek (2016) emphasized a missed opportunity for enacting Bartleby politics during the 2016 US Presidential election campaign. Following the Democratic nominations won by Hilary Clinton, Bernie Sanders publically endorsed Hilary Clinton as the Democratic candidate. In response, Žižek (2016) wrote 'Trump hit the mark when he compared his endorsement of Hilary to an Occupy partisan endorsing Lehman Brothers. Sanders should just withdraw and retain a dignified silence so that his absence would weigh heavily over the

Hilary celebrations, reminding us of what is missing and, in this way, keep the space open for more radical alternatives in future'.

Another example of Bartleby politics could have been enacted against capitalism occurred during the democratization process in the Pacific Island nation of Fiji from 2012-2014. Important to note is that the 2006 military coup in Fiji was the country's fourth since independence in 1970, with the establishment of a new constitution and/or parliamentary elections predictably following. Therefore, as the country embarked on its democratization process – starting with the development of a new constitution and ending with the 2014 elections – the most pertinent question to be asking was 'what will be different this time?' During the lead up to the September 2014 elections a series of television and radio commercials were developed by a local non-government organization. The commercials began with a group of four or five people questioning why they should bother participating in the upcoming Fiji elections. As the commercial progressed, the people began to express a variety of motivations for voting in the elections. For example, one woman commented that she would like to have a career; another commented that she wanted an end to violence against women. The implicit message of the advertisement was that the source of the inability for Fijians to realize their aspirations, human rights, and so on lies in the lack of participation in democratic processes, in particular elections. However, where the advertisement failed was in its rejection of the initial hysterical position portrayed at the beginning of the commercial. The doubt expressed by the people at the beginning of the commercials is precisely this kind of hysterical act that put under question the natural call for a return to liberal parliamentary democracy through elections. The different reasons given for why the participants in the commercial would nonetheless vote represent different desires that enable them to disavow this doubt or the failure of the liberal parliamentary democracy. Therefore, the move from this hysterical questioning to participation is made by a fetishist disavowal– that is, 'I know very well that my participation in the elections will change nothing, but nonetheless, I will participate in

the elections'. The beginning of the commercial provided an example for what people could have done in response to the democratization process; that is, in the face of the democratization process, a movement could have been built around a gesture of 'I'd prefer not to', thereby keeping the space open for alternatives to the repetition of liberal representative constitutions and elections.

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