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This article builds on foundations laid by Etienne de La Boétie to develop a theory of political power, in which violence is a marginalised and marginal phenomenon in the multiple dimensions in which power operates. This positive understanding of nonviolence depends for its success on a willingness to use our own bodies (not those of others) to preserve our own freedom and that of others, the capacity to communicate without intersubjective violence, and numbers. Using examples from nonviolent practice in Israel and occupied Palestinian territory it demonstrates that it is possible to do politics differently without the support of violence.

Keywords: nonviolence; power; pacifism; Israel; Palestine, Etienne de la Boétie

Introduction

Within political science and the cognate discipline of international relations nonviolence has been a hidden, subaltern, 'subjugated' knowledge (Jackson 2018a, 155, 2018b). This article invites critical study of this subjugated knowledge and in particular what can be learned from the practice of concerted nonviolent action. My ambition is to demonstrate that it is possible to dispense with violence to make changes in each of the multiple dimensions in which power operates. Changes in the first dimension of power imply that actors succeed in coercing their rulers to do something that they would not otherwise do without resort to violence. To raise the bar, I also assess the effectiveness of nonviolence in transforming second dimension power relations from zero sum to positive sum. Are more issues and people structured in following nonviolent action? Even more ambitious are changes at the third dimension taken-for-granted order of things such that people come to think of violence as irrational, inappropriate, or a category mistake. In the fourth dimension there would be no escape from the

relentlessly flexible concerted power that is without the support of violence. It is the sum of these complex changes at different levels that are the basis for my assessment of the effectiveness of nonviolence in stopping violence by others.

The originality of the article lies in the combination of findings from my experience of nonviolent practice with a close reading of the sixteenth century essay *The Politics of Obedience: A Discourse on Voluntary Servitude* by Etienne de la Boétie (1975). This essay is abstract, deductive and divorced from practice and best known for the theory of consent embedded in la Boétie's explanation of 'how it happens that so many men, so many villages, so many cities, so many nations, sometimes suffer under a single tyrant who has no other power than the power they give him' (1975,42). I demonstrate that a theory of political power relevant to the contemporary practice of nonviolent action can be developed out of La Boétie's approach to freedom, intersubjectivity and action combined with his insights into the multiple dimensions in which power operates.

I begin with a brief literature review taking as my point of departure La Boétie's essay. The essay was quoted at length by Leo Tolstoy (Tolstoy 1970, 35) who developed the theory of consent in his *Letter to a Hindu: The Subjection of India – Its Cause and Cure* which was read and distributed by Mohandas Gandhi (Gandhi, 1910). I pick up the story of this theory of political power, with the US American writer, Gene Sharp. Sharp was influenced by La Boétie's essay (1973, 34) in the development of his theory that all dominating elites and rulers depend for their sources of power upon the cooperation of the population and of the institutions of the society they would rule. Sharp and his followers have been criticised on the grounds that the functional one-dimensional nonviolent action they advocated may serve to reinforce violent structures (Sharp 1990, Roberts 2011, Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). I contend that the

limitations of Sharp's theory lie in his explicit rejection of the moral foundations of nonviolent action. Despite claiming that he set out to develop a conceptual framework for liberation, Sharp gave scant attention to La Boétie's exposition of the situated, embodied nature of freedom and the interdependence of my freedom with that of others. For the development of my own understanding of freedom, power and violence I return to La Boétie repeatedly throughout this article.

The following four short sections are the building blocks for a theory of nonviolence that is transformative of multi-dimensional power relations, is situated in practice, and is organised around the principles of form, meaning and number. First, I begin by uncovering the ontological and epistemological standpoints of a group of peace researchers (Gregg, Curle and Lederach) who differ from Sharp in emphasising that freedom is embodied and that being-in-the-world is contingent, social, capable and vulnerable. Next, I distinguish between power, and in particular the concerted power of Hannah Arendt, and violence. Following Howes (2009) I identify two forms of violence: intersubjective violence and the physical violence it engenders. Lastly, in order to weigh the effectiveness of nonviolence in reducing or stopping the violence of others in a world characterised by complexity I adopt Haugaard's example of 'bracketing' certain aspects of reality (2018). This 'bracketing' is helpful in understanding the effectiveness of stopping violence within the multiple and normatively neutral dimensions in which power operates.

A methodology section then describes how this experimental theory is grounded in my experience of organised, practical action performed in the public realm in the context of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. The results are both reflexive and collaborative in that they are grounded in my own experiences and relationships (Reed-Danahay 2001). Three practical examples illustrate this bottom up, experimental

theory: refusal of military service, unarmed popular resistance, and the appeal for boycott divestment and sanctions.

These three examples of practical action and their varied impact help me to build a typology of nonviolence organised around form, meaning and numbers. Nonviolence requires willingness to use one's own body (not another's) to protect the freedom of the self and of the other; thoughtful attentiveness to the meaning of the interaction; and as Arendt said, numbers of people rather than implements (1970, 42). I conclude that, given the limited success of violence in reducing or stopping violence, pacifist politics (politics without the support of either physical or intersubjective violence) both merits more attention and has the potential to be transformative of the multiple dimensions in which power operates.

The Politics of Obedience

In his essay on *The Politics of Obedience: A Discourse of Voluntary Servitude* La Boétie made the argument that violence was not necessary, and that nonviolence could be equally if not more effective in reducing or stopping the violence of others. Just when his contemporary Niccolo Machiavelli was developing his instructions for the Prince as to how he should consolidate his rule over others, La Boétie was making the provocative claim that we can each refuse to consent to our own enslavement. According to La Boétie state rule depended on the way in which the inhabitants 'permit, or, rather, bring about, their own subjection, since by ceasing to submit they would put an end to their servitude' (La Boétie 1975, 46).

In the story of this theory of political power, in which violence is a marginalised and marginal phenomenon, there is a direct line from La Boétie to Tolstoy to Gandhi. Sharp, who has been credited with providing tactical advice until his death in early 2018

to multiple movements that adopted nonviolent resistance to governments, characterised by him as dictatorships, also quoted La Boétie

> He who abuses you so has only two eyes, has but two hands, one body, and has naught but what has the least man of the great and infinite number of your cities, except for the advantage you give him to destroy you. (La Boétie 1975, 12, Sharp 1973, 11)

Sharp went out of his way to make a distinction between pacifism or moral or religious 'nonviolence' and what he calls 'political defiance' or 'nonviolent struggle applied defiantly and actively for political purposes' (2010, 137). For Sharp, nonviolent action was a pragmatic portfolio of tactics and his writings were manuals for action. His prescriptive writing has been complemented by political theory that was developed to make retrospective sense of nonviolent action as a recurring feature of oppositional movements which won changes in government (Sharp 1990, Schell 2003, Roberts 2011, Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). Sharp did warn that a strategy that limits its objective to merely destroying the incumbent dictatorship runs a great risk of producing another tyrant. He spoke too of the importance of the empowerment of the population in order to prevent the rise of a new dictatorship, however he stopped short of elaborating the ontological or epistemological foundations of the transformation of relations individually or socially.

Following the surfacing of nonviolent action in Iran in June 2009, then in Tunisia, and then in the wider Middle East and North Africa, there has been another round of literature which questions its effectiveness in reducing or stopping violence by others especially when that violence may be embedded in structural or hegemonic systems and everyday practices. Hallward and Norman distinguished between 'reformist' nonviolence, which seeks to change leaders or policies, and 'revolutionary'

nonviolence, which seeks to change the social structures and patterns of relations that sustain conflict (2015, 8). 'The Violence of Nonviolence: Problematizing Nonviolent Resistance in Iran and Egypt' by Sean Chabot and Majid Sharifi (2013) argued that by adopting Sharp's nonviolent methods to confront the visible violence of domestic regimes, Iranian and Egyptian activists had reproduced and reinforced the invisible structures and forms of violence (2013, 220). These criticisms echoed an early feminist critique of Sharp, which had argued that while Sharp understood power to be plural and relational he did not discuss how that relationship is constructed or who benefits from the relation (McGuinness 1993, 113). While recognising the shortcomings of Sharp's elaboration of nonviolence, his critics have been reluctant to let go of the possibility of developing a political theory of pragmatic nonviolence (Schock 2015). Researchers have even attempted to analyse the practices of Gandhi as practical action in politics without an ethical lens (Mantena 2012). A recent sustained endeavour to build a political theory that de-emphasises moral arguments against violence and to argue for the possibility of pacifism in interpersonal, intrastate, and interstate interactions is that by Dustin Ells Howes (2009). Like La Boétie, Howes put at the core of his work the theoretical task of delinking freedom from the necessary use of violence (2015, 2016).

According to La Boétie 'in order to have liberty nothing more is needed than to long for it.' (1975, 46) This conception of freedom, as willed, is introduced by Howes in *Toward a Credible Pacifism: Violence and the Possibilities of Politics* (2009, x) and is developed further in *Freedom without Violence: Resisting the Western Political Tradition* (2016). In contrast to Sharp and the proponents of civil resistance, Howes elaborates the particular understanding of self, intersubjectivity, agency and power he argues is associated with freedom without violence. To do this he draws on Arendt's thinking on power, by which she understood not just the human ability to act but to act

in concert (1970, 44). Howes takes up the challenge laid down by La Boétie of showing that violence is an inessential aspect of politics and power. He points to transformational political outcomes over sustained periods of incremental change that have been achieved without the support of violence giving the examples of women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery (Howes 2009, 123). The examples Howes chooses are reminders of how difficult it is to claim political outcomes given the slippery nature of power relations and the reappearance of coercive relations in different iterations. Amy Allen has exposed the multiple and moving axes of stratification affecting women in her account of the power of feminist theory (Allen, 1999). In the case of slavery, Lisa Guenther has demonstrated how the Thirteenth Amendment only partly abolished slavery in the United States, making an exception for convicted criminals. It states that 'neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, *except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted* (emphasis added), shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction' (Guenther 2013, xvii).

The difficulty of claiming political outcomes brings me to two final, and related, aspects of the literature on nonviolence. Firstly, it is often described as 'marginalised,' (Atack 2012, 3) 'ridiculed,' (Gregg and Tully 2018) even 'subjugated' (Jackson 2018a, 2018b). In the words of Maciej Bartkowski it requires 'recovery.'(2015) Secondly, nonviolence has a richer history in practice than in theory. Is it because of the situated and performative nature of nonviolent political action that theorists have neglected nonviolence? Iain Atack's book *Nonviolence in Political Theory* (2012) is an exception. Nevertheless, echoing my point about the situated and performative nature of his topic, he opens the book by stating that nonviolence has been a basis for his '*practical* [emphasis added] involvement in campaigns for peace and human rights'(2012, iv).

On the spectrum of 'pacifism to warism' (Cady 2010) there is a vast and separate literature that justifies the use of violence to stop the violence of others, which I do not consider here. In particular, I do not discuss the place of nonviolence in the context of justifications of state sovereignty and the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of violence (Atack 2012, 34-100). Although, a number of the people that I cite identify themselves as 'human rights defenders' I also deliberately do not engage with the literature related to human rights (Gordon and Berkovitch 2007, Hopgood 2009, 2015, Perugini and Gordon 2015). My focus is on practice not universal or ideal types.

I do not rule out that violence can successfully achieve political outcomes, however, given the ambivalent record of violence in stopping violence, I declare my interest in a conception of power that dispenses with violence. This is my insurgent and utopian answer to what Edward Said called the beginning questions, 'why imagine power in the first place, and what is the relationship between one's motive for imagining power and the image one ends up with' (Said, 2000, 241).

How does freedom manifest itself?

'Since freedom is our natural state, we are not only in possession of it, but have the urge to defend it' (La Boétie 1975, 51). La Boétie speaks at this point in the first person plural, however, we are not all identical, instead 'mother [nature]… has fashioned us according to the same model so that in beholding one another we might *almost* [emphasis added] recognize ourselves.' From our different positions we reach across to these different but similar beings and exercise 'the great gift of voice and speech for fraternal relationship.' In relationship and in communication with each other we become one organic whole and we can each freely choose to act 'in as much as we are all

comrades' (1975, 51). Like Arendt, La Boétie sees that freedom manifests itself in action and that the condition for any action is plurality, making freedom dependent on the public domain (Gordon 2001, 97).

It is also through action and speech that we reveal ourselves to each other. According to Arendt, this subjective in-between is not tangible, but is no less real than the world of things we visibly have in common. She calls this reality the 'web' of human relationships (Arendt 1958, 182). The necessity of others to our experience of the world is echoed by Jean Zaru when she says that 'truth involves a vulnerable and faithful risk taking. It involves real relationship' (Zaru, Eck and Schrader 2008, 25). This view of truth and reality implies that there is no view from nowhere, instead the subject, together with its sensations and praxis, is always embodied, placed or contingent.

Epistemological humility

This phenomenological understanding of politics requires further discussion. Jean Zaru whose autobiography *Occupied with Nonviolence* (2008) I have just quoted from identifies herself as a Palestinian Quaker. She was brought up in the dissident Protestant tradition that emerged during the English Revolution. The peace researchers and practitioners I refer to here are all part of a Quaker or Anabaptist tradition. Without essentialising the Quaker as 'the stranger' (Hopgood 2009, 238) I find within these peace researchers a specific shared perspective. This perspective is not just contextualised it is embodied. Adam Curle challenged the separation of mind and body and the perception of events as having discrete chains of causation (Curle 1995, Mitchels 2006). This critique of linearity is also core to the peace scholar John Paul Lederach who encourages us to think of 'ongoing social and relational spaces'(Lederach

2005, 47).

Associated with this phenomenological conception of the body is an attitude of epistemological humility. For the phenomenologist, the individual's perspective is always partial and incomplete. This epistemological humility is also foundational to peace researchers and practitioners. At its most practical it encourages a 'slow but sure' way of working (Gregg and Tully 2018, ix) as the peace practitioner leaves room for doubt and changes of heart. In extremis it is the basis on which someone may freely choose to give up his or her own life rather than impose his or her own truth on another and destroy the will of another person.

Power, violence and nonviolence

So far this phenomenological stance does not imply an ethical position. Power in all its forms (power over, power to, and power with) is positive only in the sense that it is constitutive of intersubjectivity, it is not more or less worthy or objectionable (Haugaard 2012, 2018). I will now develop the points made above in relation to embodiment and epistemological incompleteness in order to pursue the discussion of power and violence. Howes identifies two forms of violence. First he distinguishes physical violence, 'the use or destruction of another's body in order to subdue or destroy their will' (2009, 5). Secondly he defines intersubjective violence, which 'involves the experience of profoundly discordant dispositions, or encounters with individuals or groups that severely compromise or make our own way of being impossible' (2009, 6). The first form of violence is directly related to the body. The second form of violence is epistemological. Earlier I stressed that La Boétie said that we might 'almost' recognise ourselves. For the phenomenologists being with others involves creating a self that is an other I cannot fully know, and that other cannot fully know me. Largely ignored by

Sharp, intersubjective violence, which animates physical violence, manifests itself when we undermine through thought, word, or deed the freedom of the other.[1]

There is an important implication that stems from the view that power and violence are distinguishable, especially when it is combined with i) Arendt's understanding of power involving people acting in concert with one another and ii) Arendt's understanding that this power is sustained by the freedom and plurality that characterises intersubjectivity. The implication is that 'power is self sufficient in the sense that it can be sustained and nourished without the support of violence' (Howes 2009, 7). Departing from Sharp and following La Boétie, this then is my positive understanding of *non*violence: it is the power that can be sustained without the support of violence.

Complexity and the web of human relationships

La Boétie's essay exhorts the reader in an appeal in the first person singular. 'I do not ask that you place hands upon the tyrant to topple him over, but simply that you support him no longer.' (La Boétie 1975, 48) Arendt writes in the first person plural 'When we say of somebody that he is "in power" we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name' (Arendt 1970, 44). This plurality shifts the focus from the self as subject to the in-between, to what La Boétie refers to as 'the world as dwelling place' where we are in 'fraternal relationship, thus achieving by the common and mutual statement of our thoughts a communion of our wills.' In this

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[1] Gandhi distinguished between *satyagraha* and the negative *duragraha.* The latter allowed for the use of any means that avoids visible violence to pressure, humiliate, and undermine opponents.

section I want to unpack what happens in-between in 'the web of human relationships.'

So far I have developed a theory in which all individuals are free and embodied, and that freedom is exercised through speech and action in the public realm. To this I add the insight from Lederach that the world is complex and change is not tied exclusively to one thing, one action or one option (2003, 54). This aspect of complexity necessitates the last step I want to introduce before discussing the examples of practical action. If we are to assess the effectiveness of nonviolence in stopping violence by others, we will need to be able to make the comparison between complex political outcomes. To capture change in the multiple different dimensions of power, I follow Haugaard's example and 'bracket' aspects of the intangible reality in-between (2018).

When protesters succeed in coercing a strong man leader to leave office (something that he would not otherwise do) without the support of violence, first dimension power relations between the leader and the protesters change. However, as Chabot and Sharifi (2013) showed in the case of Egypt this still leaves the office of the leader intact and with it conventional state structures and power politics, at both domestic and international levels. To satisfy Chabot and Sharifi second dimension power relations would have to be transformed and more issues and more people structured in following nonviolent action. Sharp himself recommended that if economic issues are prominent in the struggle then care will be needed that economic grievances can actually be remedied after the change in government (2010, 54). Even more ambitious would be change at the third dimension taken-for-granted order of things. Change at this third dimension level in terms of stopping violence by others would require that the mass of subject people shake off the habit of taking coercive power relations and their position within them for granted and instead come to think of violence as irrational, inappropriate, or a category mistake. Paradoxically, in the fourth

dimension everyone would be free actors with no escape from the concerted power that is without the support of violence. It is the sum of these complex changes at different levels that have to be the basis of any assessment of nonviolence in stopping violence by others and I will illustrate this below in my discussion of examples of practical action.

Methodology

First let me explain my positionality because 'when we attempt to eliminate the personal, we lose sight of ourselves, our deeper intuition, and the source of our understandings— who we are and how we are in the world.' Lederach went on to say, so-called objectivity brings us to a paradoxical destination: 'We believe in the knowledge we generate but not in the inherently messy and personal process by which we acquired it' (2005, ix). It was the Quakers that gave me my first job, and it was through the Quakers that I was first introduced to Palestinians and Israelis, as well a minority who identify themselves as Palestinian and Israeli whether because they were Jewish and living in Palestine before 1948 or because they were Palestinian and found themselves living in Israel after 1948. These encounters are an important source of my understandings. Quaker Peace and Service (UK and Ireland) employed me as part of what I now look back upon as a rather Rawls experiment (Rawls 1971, 12), where I volunteered for a placement in the Middle East from behind 'a veil of ignorance' and did not know where I would go in advance. Every volunteer had to be willing to be placed in any one of the host organisations that were part of the programme, whether it was in Tel Aviv, Gaza or Amman. I was seconded for two years to the Hebron University Graduates Union (1987-1989) in the occupied Palestinian West Bank. Later I worked in the region again as the Regional Director for the Middle East of the

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) based in East Jerusalem (2009-2014).

This article is based on that work. Just as in the practice of autoethnography I also acknowledge that my research cannot be separated from experience and relationships gained at other times in other places. The first example of practical action draws on video testimonies recorded and made public by Israel Social TV, an organisation I first got to know in 2010 when on behalf of my employer I commissioned a series of short films about militarism;[2] the second example references interview material gathered as part of an oral history project conducted in partnership between the Palestinian Popular Struggle Coordinating Committee and Coventry University in the course of 2018 but in an area of the West Bank known to me since 1987;[3] and the third example is developed based on the response of AFSC as an organisation to the 2005 Palestinian appeal for boycott, divestment and sanctions at a time when I was the organisation's representative in the Middle East. The quotations are from individuals known to me directly, or accessed through organisations that I have had a relationship with over many years. Their words are either already published or were recorded, transcribed and translated in compliance with Coventry University Ethics requirements.

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[2] Established in 2006, Israel Social TV is a non-profit independent media organisation promoting social change. https://tv.social.org.il/eng/about-us

[3] The On our Land project involved a team of researchers from Coventry University led by Marwan Darweish, and including Elly Harrowell, Patricia Sellick, Mahmoud Soliman and Laura Sulin. It received support from the British Council's £30m Cultural Protection Fund, in partnership with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, which is set up to protect cultural heritage at risk due to conflict in the Middle East and North Africa. http://onourland.coventry.ac.uk

However affirmative the Quakers were of my actions, I set out here to find a rationale for my action that works for a person of no religious faith. This is my attempt to develop a theory in which people rule themselves without resort to either physical or intersubjective violence. The practice of nonviolence has been submerged. This research is from those depths, and is a bottom up, practical, experimental kind of theory building.

Three examples of practical action

For the purposes of comparison I adopt three organising principles, which I label using a short hand of form, meaning and numbers, arising from the previous discussion of embodiment, intersubjectivity and concerted power. For each example I consider whether or not the action leaves the individual vulnerable to physical harm or incarceration; how far it is performed in the public realm and the meaning ascribed to that performance; and the numbers of people involved in the action.

Refusal of military service

'Resolve to serve no more, and you are at once freed.' (La Boétie, 48) La Boétie introduces the possibility that the will alone, because of its capacity for *refusal*, is sufficient for political freedom. My first example relates to those young Israelis who refuse to enlist.[4]

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[4] In Israel there is no recognition of the right to conscientious objection for men, and an incomplete recognition of the right for women. All Israeli citizens and permanent residents aged 18 to 40 are liable to military service. Special rules apply to the exemption of Jewish and Druze religious students and women. The Ministry of Defence does automatically exempt all non-Jewish women and all Palestinian men (except for the Druze) from military

Military service is the norm, but young Israelis still have to be sent their call-up papers soon after their sixteenth birthday. Even though it goes without saying that young Israelis will do military service, the norm has to be cited in order for it to remain in force, and this opens up the possibility of refusal. In Bourdieu's terms the agents' *habitus* are harmonized, but until the process has been completed there remains a margin of uncertainty as to the outcome (Bourdieu 1977, 9, Allen 1999, 72). It is within this context that from the age of 16, when they receive their call up papers, young Israelis make the public decision to refuse military service.

Aged 19, Hilel Garmi refused to enlist. His action took the form of willingly accepting that the consequence would be incarceration. This was not hidden resistance: he had the option of approaching a military mental health officer with the intention of being declared medically unfit, but instead he chose to criticise and expose the system (*Hilel Garmi - I refuse* 2018) . In his interview with Israel Social TV he describes how the example of a Palestinian living in Gaza encouraged him to do politics differently.

> Perhaps what triggered the idea that civil disobedience is the best thing to be done in this situation were the recent demonstrations on the Gaza border. During the demonstrations I read things written by Ahmed Abu Artema. He is considered the initiator of the demonstrations. Although I did not agree with everything he wrote, and his situation is, of course, not the same as mine, I was impressed to find people who try to deal with the situation between the Jordan river and the sea without becoming violent. (*Hilel Garmi - I refuse* 2018)

Garmi not only put himself at risk of incarceration, he then shaped the meaning of his action by speaking out publicly, and in terms of numbers he linked his action to

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service. Palestinian Israelis may still volunteer to perform military service, but very few (except for among the Bedouin population of Israel) do so.

the thousands of Palestinian demonstrators in the Gaza Strip. His admiration for the action of someone he has never met, Ahmed Abu Artema, demonstrates his willingness to recognise the 'almost' other.

Luhar Altman, aged 18, refused to enlist on the same day as Hilel Garmi. Her video testimony speaks of being born into 'a reality not under our control' and the need 'to act' to make a better world (*Luhar Altman - I refuse* 2018) . Her refusal to enlist, was prompted by a period of study abroad with a Palestinian from Hebron. She explains that she believes she has to make herself vulnerable (ie her action must take the form that she willingly gives up her own physical security), if she is to have the possibility of talking to the other side 'in a way that they will listen.'

When Mattan Helman refused to enlist in 2017 Israel Social TV made a video of the groups of people gathered outside the gates of the army base. A parent, whose only son was going to the army, was recorded shouting out. 'He's cowardly, He's a shit. I'm a single parent, I have a child who goes to the army. I'm left with nothing, Why should he protect that garbage?' (*For and Against Mattan Helman's Refusal* 2017) She was outraged that her son was going to risk his life to protect the young man who refused to do his military service. The reporter went on to ask the parent:

> Can you have a conversation with these people?
> No. Don't you see that there is a split here? There's a divide.
> And how do we reduce this divide?
> I don't know. The government has to get involved. Something needs to be done.

The Israel Social TV reporter then asked Helman how he felt

> How do these angry voices around make you feel?
> I don't care about these voices. Let them say what they want. I go with my truth,
> with my opinions, and I'm going to refuse.

The intersubjective violence of the exchange between the bystander and this refuser closes down the possibility of the oppositional views being structured into an inclusive politics. It demonstrates the aspect of refusal as a form of negative power: a refusal of interaction and a refusal of power-with. Nonviolence demands that the actor is open to his or her opponent 'in as much as we are all comrades' (La Boétie 1975, 51). In this case the bystander who loves and fears for her own son, and the refuser who by his action has cut himself off from his peer group, have become antagonistic.

Teenage refusers are under pressure to communicate with officials of the state, people at the gate of the army base, and also with family and friends. Some receive support from family, others are ostracised. There may be one sibling who does military service and another who refuses within the same family: testimonies from Israel Social TV for 2018 include a twin who refuses while her twin sister serves. Refusers voice the hope that 'it will not create insolvable conflicts' within the family and they worry that people will 'look askance' at their parents and siblings (*Refusing for Peace* 2018). However, they also see that there are possibilities of family and friends holding fast both to their political views and their feelings of kinship and friendship. This 'both and' quality is expressed with regard to family 'My family mainly cares for me, meaning that they do not support my decision, certainly not in the political sense, but mainly there is a personal concern for me' (Yahalom 09 February 2018). Similarly the refusers' interviews reflect ties of friendship between people with a shared childhood 'Yes, there are people who have stopped talking to me and who have boycotted me since my refusal. But this is perhaps a test of friendship since I also have friends who enlisted and have stayed with me' (Segal 2014). Segal's words resonate with La Boétie's observation that friendship 'flourishes not so much by kindnesses as by sincerity. What makes one friend sure of another is the knowledge of his integrity'(1975, 77).

Critical to the minority of teenagers who refuse military service are the support organisations that they find beyond family and friends such as New Profile, Mesarvot, Yesh Gvul and Israel Social TV. The action of earlier refusers encourages new refusers and is creative of more of the power that Arendt equates with nonviolence.

The practical action of these young people is not only a refusal of the coercive violence that besieges and walls off the bodies of the Palestinians, but also of the structural and cultural power relations of the second and third dimension which sustain the belief that personal security is dependent upon military preparedness and which constitute Jewish Israelis as occupiers and Palestinians as occupied. La Boétie understood how this relationship is internalised saying 'they will think they are obliged to suffer this evil, and will persuade themselves by example and imitation of others' (La Boétie 1975, 64-65). The refusers are exceptional in their insistence on thinking what they are doing and avoiding 'the complacent repetition of "truths"' (Arendt 1958, 5).

> My refusal actually made me understand that there is politics that goes beyond the politics of separation and loyalty to an oppressive regime in Israel. That there is politics that says: if a government goes against our path, if a government goes against a path of peace, equality, cooperation, we'll not willingly serve it.
> (Yahalom 09 February 2018)

The form of this nonviolent action is willingness to accept incarceration; the meaning communicated is emancipatory of both Palestinians and Israelis; and because of this inclusion of the other there is a possibility of increasing numbers.

Organised unarmed popular resistance

'You sow your crops in order that he may ravage them.' La Boétie berates the farmers who live in a state of *voluntary* servitude and claims that a people enslaves itself by giving its consent to its misery, conniving with the thief who plunders its property, and

yielding their bodies for hard labour (1975, 46). He concedes that in the beginning of tyrannical rule men submit under constraint and by force, but goes on to say that a subject people 'fall into complete forgetfulness of its freedom'(1975, 55).

The Palestinians have their own word to describe the persistent, steadfast awareness of, and everyday practice of freedom: *ṣumūd*. My second example of practical action reflects on *ṣumūd* as practised by Palestinians living in the South Hebron Hills in Area C of the West Bank under Israeli military and civilian control. This is an area I have been visiting since 1987 but the interviews quoted from here were gathered as part of an oral history research project supported by the Palestinian Popular Struggle Coordinating Committee and Coventry University in 2018. Here Palestinian agricultural land is at risk of confiscation for the building and expansion of illegal Jewish only settlements, closure for military exercises by the Israeli occupation forces, or designation as nature or archaeological reserves (Gordon 2008). Palestinian villages are also being severed from their agricultural land by the route of the Israeli built Separation Wall (International Court of Justice 2004). The farmers who are made landless under these circumstances have few options other than to seek employment in the illegal Jewish only settlements or risk crossing the Wall without permits to work in Israel.

'In the past we were weaker, once we heard the shooting, we ran away.'[5] This farmer admits that, just as La Boétie described, Palestinians have been forced to surrender their lands and their homes. Across the South Hebron Hills the population is

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[5] Interviewee in Yatta, May 2018

made up of Palestinians who have been physically displaced in 1948,[6] endured

Jordanian rule until 1967,[7] have suffered ongoing displacement while living under

Israeli occupation, and are neglected by the Palestinian Authority which since the Oslo

Accords has surrendered military and civilian control of Area C to the Israeli

government, but they are not completely cowed. Occupation means not only losing land

and homes, but also much self-confidence, self-reliance and self-respect. Keeping self-

respect alive is *şumūd* (Johansson and Vinthagen 2015, Darweish and Sellick 2017,

Seidel 2017). To keep mutual self-respect alive is to be governed by the fourth

dimension of power and practise disciplined nonviolence.

Şumūd expands in numbers when someone shows willingness to put his own

body in harm's way rather than be subdued. A farmer described the physical violence

done to himself and his crops to force him off his land. 'The settlers shot at me. I lost

my legs, they had to carry me on the back of a donkey which walked for 4kms.' The

same farmer reported that 'If I had not got injured and remained on my land, no one

would have known about it and the Israelis would have confiscated it.' His physical

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[6] Interviewee in Al Twaneh, March 2018, 'People from Abu Jendia family and Alhammedeh
family from Ar-ara in the Negev came to live with us.'

[7] Interviewee in Al Twaneh, March 2019, aged 67 remembered Jordanian rule saying 'What
they did was worse than what Israel did. The Israeli army would not come and stay, they
would not feel safe. But the Jordanian army did not care, … you had to feed them, they
would not care. They would come to arrest someone and if the person they came for was not
here, they would stay for two or three days. They would order us to feed their horses, to give
horses sugar to eat. They would stay until the person they came for returned. What the
Jordanians did to us was not little. May God take our revenge from the Jordanians, the
Israelis, and the Palestinians. May God get rid of them all.'

injury and stubborn lonely presence brought his struggle to the attention of other Palestinian farmers as well as the Israeli Human Rights Organisation B'Tselem. 'B'Tselem helped in this regard… the official at B'Tselem was smart and helped a lot.' But not withstanding the increase in power-with of the individual farmer, who now had neighbours to work with him and the B'Tselem official as an advocate, the settlers also used physical violence against his crops. 'We harvested our 25 *dunam*[8] and we put the wheat harvest in piles. We worked from morning till evening. In the early morning I learned that the settlers burned the harvest.'[9]

The Israelis who live in the illegal settlements in the South Hebron Hills are a daily physical threat to the farmers' lives. 'We feel so worried about our shepherds, we feel worried about our children. When our children used to go to milk the sheep, people wait for them to come back impatiently as they are worried they would be hurt by the settlers.'[10] Unarmed Italian volunteers from Operation Dove[11] go on foot to provide a protective presence and boost the confidence of the children (and their parents) to continue farming. The readiness of the Palestinian farmers to put their own bodies in the way of violence sends a message that their presence is protective not combative (Wallace 2018). This has encouraged children, their parents, Israeli and international human rights observers to participate with them in their struggle.

The disciplined, public practice of *ṣumūd* is not to be taken for granted. Another third dimensional power holds sway over the youth in the South Hebron Hills. 'There is

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[8] 1 *dunam* is about 900 square metres

[9] Interview, Qawawis, 2018

[10] Interview, Al Twaneh, 2018

[11] http://www.operazionecolomba.it/en/ accessed 09 January 2019

no connection between people now… the son leaves his parents and lives alone. They do not care for life as before. They are copying the life style of the Israelis. Their money is not blessed…'[12] Some young people do not see it as the natural order of things that they will preserve what was precious to their parents. As well as the pull of the third dimension there is also the possibility of second dimension structural domination within the organisation of popular resistance. The organisers in South Hebron Hills are aware that the practice of nonviolent action can attract more people only if they are relentlessly flexible (Soliman 2019). This may mean being prepared to make way for the younger generation. A student, aged 19, described how she felt 'This is our culture and it is our responsibility to save it. I think it is the youth's responsibility because we have the energy, we are educated in universities –we can read, write and understand...'[13]

Organised unarmed resistance becomes more popular and transforms power relations in its different dimensions as leaders demonstrate their willingness to put their own bodies in harm's way, different groups of people with different capacities are structured into the organised resistance, and a *habitus* is generated where energetic practical action with others is the norm and violence is seen as inappropriate and ineffective. It is noticeable that this resistance is intimately entwined with the patterns of domination: its leaders need to be seen to be suffering, if they are coopted, protected from physical harm, and seen to be living in comfort, they are rendered impotent.

The Appeal for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions

'It should not enter the mind of anyone that nature has placed some of us in slavery,

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[12] Interviewee, Al Twaneh, March 2018

[13] Interviewee, Al Mufagarah, September 2018

since she has actually created us all in one likeness.' (La Boétie 1975, 51) My last example deals with the relationship between people living in comfortable circumstances and those who are suffering. On the first anniversary of the International Court of Justice's 2004 ruling on the illegality of the Separation Wall (International Court of Justice 2004), 171 Palestinian civil society organisations issued an appeal over the heads of states, to 'people of conscience.' 'We appeal to you to pressure your respective states to impose embargoes and sanctions against Israel. We invite conscientious Israelis to support this Call, for the sake of justice and genuine peace' (Boycott Divestment and Sanctions Movement July 2005).

The Palestinian civil society organisations made their appeal from a position where the people they served were suffering from direct physical violence and restrictions on movement. Here are three examples of the companies that were targeted for profiting from the coercive control of Palestinian bodies. Until 2016 the British security company G4S provided security and control systems for prisons where Palestinians were incarcerated. It has now been sold to the Israeli equity fund and has become G4S Israel. Hewlett Packard technology was used to recognise the hands and faces of Palestinians at the biometric access controlled checkpoints in the West Bank and exits to and from the besieged Gaza Strip.[14] Veolia Transportation operated buses which transported Jewish Israelis only (discriminating against Palestinians). Veolia sold all of its holdings to Israeli investors in 2015.[15] The response of these companies to the BDS campaign suggests that the campaign contributed to the decision of these

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[14] https://whoprofits.org/company/hewlett-packard-enterprise-hpe/ Accessed 09 January 2019

[15] https://whoprofits.org/updates/removing-veolia-environnement-transdev-and-caisse-des-depots-et-consignations-cdc-from-the-who-profits-database/ Accessed 09 January 2019

companies to withdraw from the Israeli market. But could the campaign be described as nonviolent in its form, meaning and numbers?

In this relationship between the suffering and the comfortable, Palestinian advocates of boycott, divestment and sanctions have been ready to endure incarceration and restrictions on movement and have been unambiguous in their appeal for support. The form and meaning of their protest conform to my definition of nonviolence. My critical focus here is on whether the corresponding action from the 'people of conscience' who respond to the appeal has equal clarity. Michele Micheletti and Didem Oral discuss 'The Boycott Movement: The Case of Israel' as an example of problematic political consumerism, arguing that the overriding moral claim of the Palestinians clashes with the overriding moral claim of victims of anti-Semitism leading to confused messaging on the part of BDS supporters (2018). Darweish and Rigby also assess that the response to the Palestinian appeal has been muted in comparison to that of the surrogate boycott of South Africa, which targeted companies operating in the apartheid state, because of competing moral claims (2015).

Inspired by my reading of La Boétie, I give a slightly different account of the problematic ambiguity of the actions of those who respond positively to the Palestinian appeal for boycott, divestment and sanctions. La Boétie offers an insight that helps situate the Palestinian civil society organisations' interlocutors. In his description of the dictator he describes the way in which the dictator is maintained by those who are 'accomplices in his cruelties, companions in his pleasures, panders to his lusts, and sharers in his plunders' (La Boétie 1975, 71). He counts those who profit under the tyrant. 'The consequence of all this is fatal indeed. And whoever is pleased to unwind the skein will observe that not the six thousand but a hundred thousand, and even millions, cling to the tyrant by this cord to which they are tied' (La Boétie 1975, 71).

Wherever they are situated people of conscience are inescapably complicit in the complex system of global capitalism that sustains the inequalities between the comfortable and the suffering. The hands of the comfortable are not clean. According to La Boétie, we are all implicated in the complex system that maintains oppression.

Individual Israelis and their supporters argue that the implementation of boycott, divestment and sanctions against selected companies that profit from the occupation is unjustifiable, on the grounds that supporters of boycott, divestment and sanctions remain silent on these fourth dimensional ties that bind them to oppression in other contexts. In their counter-arguments, some campaigners have referenced changes which I situate in the second and third dimensions of power. For example, supporters of the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign have gone out of their way to insist that the appeal for boycott, divestment and sanctions, is not a unilateral measure, but is a form of rightful protest within the structures of international laws (Falk 2017, Micheletti and Oral 2018). Other supporters have made use of symbolic power by generating comparisons with the boycotts practised by the civil rights movement in the USA and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa in order to shift the third dimension of power in which it is taken-for-granted that Palestinians' movement should be controlled and that young Israelis should be enlisted to wield that control (Sánchez and Sellick 2017, 88). At the same time a fourth dimensional emancipatory power is emerging from alliances between Palestinian campaigners and movements such as Black Lives Matter (Seidel, 2016) whose members accept that responding positively to the 2005 appeal from Palestinian civil society is a necessary but insufficient part of a global unravelling of the knotted relationships which bind us all to La Boétie's tyrant.

Numbers and the effectiveness of nonviolence in stopping violence without the support of violence

So what did these three examples of practical action reveal about the possibility of stopping violence without the support of violence? They tell us about the importance of form and its relationship with embodiment; meaning and its relationship with intersubjectivity; and crucially numbers and their relationship with Arendt's concept of power. 'Indeed one of the most obvious distinctions between power and violence is that power always stands in need of numbers, whereas violence up to a point can manage without them because it relies on implements' (Arendt 1970, 42). The first two examples discussed do not yet have numbers. The Israeli refusers of military service who take a public stand and risk imprisonment are an exceptional minority not a mass movement. Palestinian campaigners and their Israeli and international allies who are prepared to defend their land in Area C with their bodies have attracted solid support at the level of the small villages next to settlements and along the route of the Wall. However, they struggle to coordinate actions horizontally with other villages or to make the vertical connections to the Palestinian national leadership (Soliman 2019). Not since the first *intifada* 1987-93 has there been widespread and sustained participation in Palestinian campaigns of popular unarmed resistance, although the 2018 march in the Gaza Strip demonstrates that when Palestinians resolve to do so the everyday hidden practice of *ṣumūd* can emerge with scale as organised public *ṣumūd*. The third case of the Appeal for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions struggles for numbers in the occupied Palestinian territory where Palestinians have few economic options which are independent of the Israeli economy, but has the potential to mobilise billions of people externally to exercise consumer choice and to create transnational alliances.

All the examples show that nonviolence grows when it is not ring-fenced to a closed group. Arendt's account of power-with, of solidarity that is not tied to identity groups, is critical. The Israeli military refuser was inspired to practical action by the

example of the Palestinian leading the nonviolent march in Gaza to lift the siege. The Palestinian farmer was able to stay on his land, partly thanks to the accompaniment of the Israeli working with B'Tselem. The Palestinians who made the appeal for boycott, divestment and sanctions used the information made public by the Israeli researchers working with the organisation Who Profits. This inclusive nonviolence should not be confused with dialogue, which often reinforces asymmetric power relations between participants (Thiessen and Darweish 2018). Instead this action is best described as solidarity which allows movements to move beyond the oppositions and exclusions of identity politics (Allen, 2017, 2018, 87-118).

Conclusion

I began by asking how effective nonviolence is in stopping violence by others. I have demonstrated that the answer is to be found in a typology of practice that conceives of the self as willing to risk personal bodily harm, vigilant over meaning making, and acting freely in concert with others in the public realm. This behaviour is founded in a phenomenological understanding of being-in-the-world combined with an attitude of epistemological humility. This means not only that my view is incomplete and changeable, but that nothing is sacred and there are no ideal types. The power that emerges out of intersubjective encounters in which violence is marginalised is 'risk taking' because the participants willingly risk injury to, or incarceration of, their own bodies (not those of others) to do politics differently. This power may be framed as a refusal, but it is never a closed-ness to the other, instead Zaru described it as 'faithful' (2008, 25). In extremis it is the basis on which someone may freely choose to give up his or her own life rather than impose his or her own truth on another and destroy the will of another

person. Anything else and, as La Boétie explained, we acquiesce in our own subjection. La Boétie's writing was speculative and he divorced his theory from practice. By reading his essay in the context of practical action in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory I conclude that there is a possibility of doing politics differently and ruling ourselves without the support of violence.

Acknowledgements

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