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Political Philosophy of the Impossible: Authority, Domination, and Social Movements

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Political Philosophy of the Impossible
Authority, Domination, and Social Movements

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《道德經》

第四十八章

「為學日益，為道日損，
損之又損，以至於無為；
無為而無不為。
取天下常以無事，
及其有事，不足以取天下。」
In the pursuit of learning, every day something is acquired.

In the pursuit of TAO, every day something is dropped.

Less and less is done

Until non-action is achieved.

When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.

The world is ruled by letting things take their course.

It cannot be ruled by interfering.¹

Introduction

On July 1st of 1997, the flag of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was set to replace the flag of the United Kingdom in Hong Kong. After a symbolic ceremony attended by government authorities of both countries, the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong would be completed overnight. In the popular social imaginary, this event marks the “Handover” of Hong Kong from Britain back to China, as the two powerful states gracefully return the city from a borrower, Britain, back to the lender, China. The implicit notion here is that Hong Kong is a territorial commodity that did not have the right to determine its own future, but can only rely on the decisions made by distant authorities. Fast-forward 17 years to 2014, when the authorities of the PRC decided to interpret the Sino-British Joint Declaration in their own terms, and published a White Paper (2014) reserving their power to vet candidates who run for the Chief Executive position of Hong Kong. Upon receiving the news that the government of Hong Kong is subservient to the ruling party in Beijing, sectors of the Hong Kong population—predominantly high school and college students—decided to organize a peaceful protest movement in the belief that the population of Hong Kong should have the right to self-determination.

After Hong Kong’s “return” to China on July 1, 1997, it has increasingly become a mere “political appendage” of the government in Beijing. In an interview with Mr. Chan, a community artist in Hong Kong who participated in the movement, we discussed the topic of self-determination and to what extent Hong Kong has always been a colony even after the Handover from Britain to China. Mr. Chan claims that the Handover is illegitimate, considering that Hong Kong was never involved in any of the decisions that affected its future and its laws, including British colonization, the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the Basic Law, and the “return” of Hong Kong to China—the ruling authorities in Britain and China were always in control. The lack of political self-determination is one of the main reasons for the protests in

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3 Chan, “Interview with Local Artist on the Umbrella Movement,” interview by author, January 17, 2018.
Hong Kong, which, coupled with patterns of social inequality, turned public attention to the electoral system in Hong Kong. In another interview I had with a restaurant cooperative worker who participated in the Umbrella Movement, he suggested to me that the contemporary “one-person-one-vote” electoral system represents merely one facet of neoliberal capitalist domination, because the parameters to determine who gets elected always function to safeguard the interests of the business and political elites, and to encourage a consumerist mentality of voting every election cycle without persistent democratic engagement in between.\(^4\) The fact is that the Chief Executive of Hong Kong has always been elected indirectly through a political organ known as “Functional Constituencies,” which predominantly consists of the business and corporate elites. A dual problem of this Electoral College-esque system is that voting (including universal suffrage) does not necessarily lead to political representation, and that political representation does not lead to genuine democracy and self-determination. These problems are in large part the inspiration for this thesis. In contrast to practical faith in representative forms of political authority, social movements have the potential to create direct democracies that do not necessarily rely on hierarchical forms of political authority and control. There are, of course, some social movements that are in favor of hierarchies based on strict authority, but these movements are not the focus of my thesis. Instead, I want to emphasize movements that are explicitly anti-authoritarian.

The Umbrella Movement represents an apt instance of explicit anti-authoritarianism that can serve as a philosophical, political, and anthropological case study. In my interview with Benny Tai, one of the co-founders of the Occupy Central movement, we discussed the question: to what extent is the use of authority legitimate in movements that are explicitly anti-authoritarian? He explains that anti-authoritarian movements can rely on roughly three kinds of democratic practice, namely direct democracy, deliberative democracy, and representative democracy.\(^5\) He claims that the Occupy Central movement that he co-

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\(^4\) “Interview with Restaurant Cooperative Worker,” interview by author, January 20, 2018.

founded relied on all three of these mechanisms, which means that authority is sometimes legitimate and even necessary provided that it is used appropriately. He claims that, in his experience organizing Occupy Central, he acted as an authority when he facilitated discussion by providing useful information to other participants in the movement. Given his privileged background as a highly educated law professor in Hong Kong, he had a responsibility to exercise his authority in times of need. When he assumed the role of a facilitator in the deliberative assemblies (sometimes called “deliberative day” or “D-Day”) of the Occupy Central movement, he acted as an authority of expertise. His authority is not used for purposes of domination but for the sake of creating solidarity and assisting others. In other instances, however, his role as an authority receded when he acted as an individual within the occupational protests. His previous role as an authority is rendered futile because of the lack of a need for it. Tai’s use of legitimate authority is an example of how leadership and authority is sometimes justifiable in certain situations but never in the long-term.

The question of authority is not only important in social movements, as in Benny Tai’s case, but also in how we examine social life. This is especially true when considering how ubiquitous authority is in social life, whether it is the authority of governments, bureaucrats, CEOs, professors, or the authority that each of us hold as we assert our beliefs or act in a certain way. But how can we determine whether an authority is legitimate or not? What are some political criteria that can be used to justify certain authorities and deny others? To explore these questions that I find philosophically interesting and significant, I began looking at works about authority written by anti-authoritarian philosophers such as Mikhail Bakunin and William Godwin. Based on Bakunin and Godwin, I argue that illegitimate authority—which I call “domination” in this thesis—consists of the exercise of authority over others with the intention and consequence of acquiring and maintaining power and influence. Domination is authority used for purposes of appropriation and gaining superiority over others rather than for solidarity and assistance to others. My philosophical investigation into illegitimate authority prompted
me to consider critiques of domination in the works of philosophers Val Plumwood and John P. Clark. Specifically, I synthesized Plumwood’s critique of the ideological basis of domination and Clark’s schematic representation of domination in four different “spheres” of social reality—ideology, imaginary, ethos, and institutions.

Plumwood’s observation of the ideological basis of domination is that it is first and foremost a dualistic one, where a relationship of hierarchy is established between two terms or classes. Plumwood understands this relationship as characterized by notions of superiority and inferiority, or mastery and subordination. She observes that, historically, the tendency to philosophize in dualistic terms has helped to ideologically justify practices and institutions such as slavery, colonization, and imperialism. With the help of dualisms such as mind/body, reason/nature, male/female, and white/colored, domination was made ideologically justifiable and conventional, as potential continuity between individuals are denied when they are homogenized into two radically separate categories. In response to this dualistic worldview, Plumwood suggests that intentional recognition of non-dualist and non-hierarchical alternatives can be a way out of the fly-bottle of domination. Plumwood’s critique of domination is applicable to race, gender, class, or anthropocentric dualisms. Like Plumwood, Clark also recognizes the ideological aspect of domination. However, Clark’s critique of domination extends to incorporate other aspects of social reality, including the social imaginary, social ethos, and social institutions. He recognizes, in addition to ideologies related to domination, that domination could also be socially conditioned, habituated, and institutionalized. My thesis is an attempt to synthesize Plumwood and Clark’s critiques of domination, as I explore different forms of domination that stem from coercive authority, such as imperial, economic, gender, racial, ecological, and legal domination.

Applying this understanding of authority and domination to my original study of the Umbrella Movement, I have explored how non-dominating forms of social organization are created in public spaces. These social organizations encourage open discussions of important issues without resorting to
authority and hierarchy. My project thus evolved into an exploration of non-dominating ways of living, and how transformations in ideology, narrative, habits, and institutions are necessary in such a process. My thesis relies on a combination of theoretical support and empirical evidence to illustrate examples of non-dominating ways of life. Particularly, I want to highlight how non-hierarchical organizations can displace traditional bureaucratic and top-down institutions. In the Umbrella Movement, for example, participants experimented with democracy through decision-making processes that did not necessitate authority or top-down command. Self-organized institutions in the occupied territories of the Umbrella Movement, such as medical care stations and common-pool resource stations, demonstrate how non-dominating institutions can be formed as alternatives to existing ones, where individuals voluntarily associate with a view to strive for a common good—self-determination.

Self-organized forms of practices and institutions that arise out of movements such as the Umbrella protests demonstrate that existing structures of power and authority are contingent, and that they can be dismantled or reconstructed according to the needs of the individuals that they purport to serve. Much of my observation here is expressed in the works of John Dewey, such as in his Democracy and Education (1916). Dewey is oftentimes labeled as a progressive liberal in the United States, however, his ideas are much more radical than that, as he is consistently critical of forms of structural domination that many “liberals” tend downplay or ignore. In his works, Dewey argues against externally imposed end goals that tamper with actual processes in education or workplaces. For Dewey, education and work are originally intended to enhance the life experiences of the participants themselves, rather than serving externally imposed objectives such as economic incentive or profitmaking. In all aspects of social life and human activity, individuals should be able to determine for themselves the nature and condition of their work, without having to subordinate themselves and their work to goals dictated by others, and to serve as instruments of the interests and will of others. In Democracy and Education, Dewey writes about the possibility of emancipatory work:
It is pertinent, however, to inquire why the idea is so current that work involves subordination of an activity to an ulterior material result. The extreme form of this subordination, namely drudgery, offers a [clue]. Activity carried on under conditions of external pressure or coercion is not carried on for any significance attached to the doing. The course of action is not intrinsically satisfying; it is a mere means for avoiding some penalty, or for gaining some reward at its conclusion. What is inherently repulsive is endured for the sake of averting something still more repulsive or of securing a gain hitched on by others. Under unfree economic conditions, this state of affairs is bound to exist. Work or industry offers little to engage the emotions and the imagination; it is a more or less mechanical series of strains. Only the hold which the completion of the work has upon a person will keep him going. But the end should be intrinsic to the action; it should be its end—a part of its own course.

What Dewey is pointing at here is integral to his understanding of free and unhindered experiences, where human activity is not subordinated to the external end goals driven by material motives or domination. Activities are instead reliant upon the intrinsic satisfaction that they contribute to individual social lives, which constantly represents what he calls the “freeing of activities.” My thesis argues that much of what Dewey describes in theory is practically implemented in self-organized movements that are democratic in nature, where authority is used legitimately for purposes of solidarity and mutual assistance, without subordinating certain individuals to the authority of others. In the Umbrella protests, new forms of practices and institutions have emerged in such a manner, where individuals voluntarily organize to direct their work according to their needs and desires. This is not to glorify the achievements of social movements, and to say that they are “utopian” by any standard, but that they represent a glimpse of an alternative. Non-dominating organizations in social movements demonstrate that more humane and self-directed alternatives are not impossible, but an ever-present possibility if we decide to collectively mobilize against existing forms of domination—whether they are related to race, gender, class, or the environment.

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7 Ibid, 59.
I am under no illusion that my thesis would have any significant impact in ameliorating the social sufferings that stem from the forms of domination listed above. My purpose in writing this thesis is to learn about the topics that I am interested in, and as an excuse to study these topics independently outside of the classroom environment (without the pressure of assignments, exams, grades, and class participation). I understand that my style of writing may not be the clearest throughout this text, but I have consciously strived to communicate my ideas in the simplest manner possible without having to sacrifice philosophical depth. Any shortcomings in this regard means that, for me as a writer, there is much room for improvement in the future. The views and opinions that I express in this thesis do not necessarily reflect my own beliefs, but are expressed nonetheless because they may contain partial truths, or because they are integral to the arguments made by the philosophers that I discuss. The thesis of this work, however, is representative of my belief and what I want to suggest as the main argument of this work.

The thesis of this work is that the recognition of non-dominating forms of authority in social life, along with the implementation of self-directed social organizations, can help address existing forms of domination in race, gender, class, and the environment. Following the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong was what first led me to explore topics of authority and domination. To explore these topics through the Umbrella Movement, I conducted a series of interview researches with people who have participated in the movement in order to acquire first-hand information. Using Bakunin and Godwin’s understandings of authority, and a synthesis of Plumwood and Clark’s critiques of domination, I explore in this work different forms of domination that stem from coercive authority, such as imperial, economic, gender, racial, ecological, and legal domination. In Chapter 1 (“Domination As Illegitimate Authority”), I will provide a framework used to assess the legitimacy of authority, evaluating the bounds of acceptable authority. My arguments will take for granted certain assumptions related to human freedom and autonomy, stressing the importance of solidarity and mutual aid as desirable practices in achieving social
and political harmony. These premises are further developed in Chapter 2. I will begin Chapter 1 by exploring notions of authority provided by anarchist and non-anarchist philosophers such as Max Weber, William Godwin, and Mikhail Bakunin. I will then develop my analysis of authority with the help of Val Plumwood and John Clark, in order to parse out the logical structures of domination, with considerations of Clark’s four spheres of social reality—ideology, social imaginary, social ethos, and institutions.

In Chapter 2 (“Alternatives To Domination”), I will continue the discussion of domination set out in Chapter 1. I will explore the wealth of literature on anarchist philosophy to understand how the state is a contingent rather than a necessary structure of social life, and how state institutions oftentimes support networks of domination based on illegitimate authority. I will explore definitions of “the state” offered by Pyotr Kropotkin and Errico Malatesta, and based on these definitions, discuss anti-authoritarian practices that contrast with statist practices. To further explore anarchism, we will look at Plumwood’s “counter-hegemonic stance” in the context of her critique of the logic of domination, and attempt to provide a counter-ideology to dualist and hierarchical notions in dominating ideologies. Plumwood’s counter-hegemonic framework will provide a more robust framework to clarify and elaborate the anti-authoritarian model of authority found in classical anarchist philosophy. Drawing on Plumwood, Kropotkin, and Malatesta’s work will enable us to build a basis of political philosophy that sees the state not as a necessary structure to human life, but as a historical contingency that should be undermined or dismantled if domination exists. The preliminary conclusion that I want to draw in this second chapter is that individuals should be directly involved in the political process with regards to decisions that affect them. Such an idea would require the active engagement and endeavor of individuals to lead lives that are constantly aimed at the creation of free experiences. At the end of the chapter, we will discuss the possibility of creating new social realities drawing from Clark’s work. Specifically, I will use Clark’s
analyses of *Satyagraha*\(^8\) and “disaster anarchism”\(^9\) in this last section as a blueprint to conduct a similar case study, which will be discussed in the final chapter (Chapter 3).

In Chapter 3 (“Social Movements: A Case Study of the Umbrella Movement”), we journey to the streets of Hong Kong and glimpse the experience and significance of social movements in relation to what we have discussed in the first two chapters. In a case study of Hong Kong’s Occupy Central and Umbrella Movement (2014), we will look at how people have taken matters into their own hands in undermining structures of domination. Through observations from afar, and through interviews with participants of the Umbrella Movement, I will discuss the ideology and social imaginary that are based on Hong Kong’s colonial past under British rule, and the contemporary neocolonial revivals of the colonizing mentality in the context of China. I will also look at how social ethos and institutions played a role in the development of social movements, and to what extent authority is legitimate in movements that are explicitly anti-authoritarian. In general, Chapter 3 will be about how social movements and civil disobedience are significant considerations that political philosophers have traditionally neglected.

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Chapter 1

Domination As Illegitimate Authority

I. The Legitimacy of Authority

One of the central concerns of political philosophy is the legitimacy of any given social order, ranging from the legitimacy of corporations to the legitimacy of school curriculums. Any such social order presupposes the existence of some form of authority, whether it is derived from the rule of law, traditional practices, or certain designated leaders. Max Weber identifies these three forms of authorities respectively as “rational authority,” “traditional authority,” and “charismatic authority.” He discusses the basis of authority as founded on the belief of its legitimacy, claiming that every social order “attempts to establish and to cultivate” such belief. However, the mere belief of the legitimacy of authority does not in any way provide further justification for the existence of such authority. It is rather the intention and consequence of the authority exercised that determines whether or not the authority is legitimate or not. Weber’s classification of authority is limited in this regard, because it does not pay sufficient attention to the intention and consequences of authority. To do so, an alternative way of thinking about authority is needed, one that adequately describes not only authority, but also the obedience that necessarily follows from a successful authority.

In Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793), William Godwin conceptualizes three different kinds of authority that can yield corresponding types of obedience: 1) personal authority based on one’s own private judgment, which he calls “authority of reason,” yields obedience based on understanding; 2) authority of expertise (or expert authority) based on superiority of information yields obedience based on

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“confidence,” and 3) coercive authority based on “arbitrary interference of some voluntary being” yields compulsory obedience.11 Godwin claims that the first of the three kinds of authority based on one’s own private judgment is always legitimate, whereas the latter two types of authority are always susceptible to being used against those who obey them. Without denying Weber’s contribution to understandings of authority, I will opt to use Godwin’s three categories of authority instead of Weber’s. My reason for doing so is because I am concerned with the assessment of legitimacy itself, rather than understanding the source of legitimacy as in the case of Weber’s classifications. The notion of domination can help in understanding whether authorities are legitimate or not, since domination is defined here as the exercise of authority over others with the intention and consequence of acquiring and maintaining power and influence. Domination is symptomatic of authoritarian forms of authority, where authority is exercised for the purpose of appropriation and mastery rather than solidarity. As opposed to authority based on solidaristic social interactions, domination indicates that authority is imposed on others in authoritarian manners, which oftentimes function against the will of those whom the authority is imposed upon. In other words, the authoritarian character of imposed authority is the basis of domination.

Domination as an authoritarian approach in exercising authority can be distinguished from non-authoritarian forms of authority. One example of non-authoritarian authority is authority that is based on competence (expertise) or prior experience. In contrast to domination, non-authoritarian authority is legitimate because it is based on the voluntary agreement of those who are deferring to such authority. In such a scenario, authority is exercised with solidarity between all participants involved, rather than profiting an individual or exclusive group of people. Mikhail Bakunin illustrates accurately the epistemological dimensions of legitimate authority:

In the matter of boots, I refer to the authority of the bootmaker; concerning houses, canals, or railroads, I consult that of the architect or the engineer. For such or such special knowledge I

apply to such or such a savant. But I allow neither the bootmaker nor the architect nor savant to impose his authority upon me. I listen to them freely and with all the respect merited by their intelligence, their character, their knowledge, reserving always my incontestable right of criticism and censure. I do not content myself with consulting a single authority in any special branch; I consult several; I compare their opinions, and choose that which seems to me the soundest. But I recognise no infallible authority, even in special questions; consequently, whatever respect I may have for the honesty and the sincerity of such or such individual, I have no absolute faith in any person. Such a faith would be fatal to my reason, to my liberty, and even to the success of my undertakings; it would immediately transform me into a stupid slave, an instrument of the will and interests of others.¹²

The capacity for an authority to exercise its power is dependent upon the deference it receives, which corresponds to Godwin’s conceptualization of the three ways that authority can yield obedience. However, as voluntary deference to authority devolves into the servile acquiescence to authority, the opportunity is created for domination to occur, because obedience becomes forced into the individual by means of coercion, social conditioning, or habituation. In Bakunin’s passage, he provides insight into the authority of competence, such that authority is neither imposed nor assumed to be infallible. The authority is exercised instead with the intention and consequence of assisting and lending advice to others who need it. When Bakunin consults the bootmaker for advice on boots, or when he refers to an architect on the structure of houses, Bakunin is not compelled to carry out every suggestion or believe that these suggestions are absolute or infallible. In Bakunin’s example, authority of competence can be taken to indicate a skillful command of experience in a particular domain, which can be of potential assistance to another person’s needs. As a form of legitimate authority, the authority of competence does not depreciate the possibility for others to freely decide for themselves what their beliefs, actions, or needs are, since doing so would transform them into “stupid slaves” that become used for the will and interests of someone else. Rather, the legitimacy of the authority of competence rests on how well it contributes to the building of solidarity and the non-coercive exchange of experience.

However, other anarchist philosophers have made the counterargument that authority based on “competence” or “expertise” can amount to tyranny based on merit, thereby having to reject Bakunin’s framework of legitimate authority. If competence and expertise were to be new standards to be valorized, then, according to this argument, individual judgment might be sacrificed. In his defense of individual judgment, Godwin claims that authority based on competence and expertise, which he takes to be based on “confidence,” is among “the worst forms of authority” since it “undermines individual judgment and prevents intellectual and moral development.” While Godwin acknowledges that authority based on competence and expertise can be non-coercive, he is skeptical of the reliance on others’ knowledge and opinions because it diminishes our own initiative to search for knowledge and discover things for ourselves. When “expert” authorities lull us into obeying them, Godwin argues that we are surrendering our responsibility to think and act for ourselves.

While Godwin’s reminder of the potential tyranny of authority based on competence is helpful, his counterargument does not sufficiently undermine authority of expertise as a whole. In other words, Bakunin’s description of expert authority can still be legitimate if the authority is voluntarily accepted. The confidence that Bakunin has in the bootmaker or architect is free of any external compulsion, and is not predicated upon the enhancement of the power and influence of the person in authority. Godwin’s skepticism of expert authority can instead be attributed to other factors at play. An example of this would be the role of ideology in biasing beliefs in the expert authority, such as in the case when the authority of politician is seen as a form of “expertise,” when in fact their authority is ideologically motivated—oftentimes fueled by the desire to be re-elected or to maintain their positions of power. In such a case, we are misled to believe in a false authority, or improper authority. The fallacy arises due to an argumentum ad verecundiam (“argument from authority”), where appeals to authority are made without warranting additional evidence or justification. Given such, Godwin’s general skepticism of authority based on

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13 Clark, The Impossible Community, 138.
confidence is a valuable contribution that can substantiate Bakunin’s conception of legitimate authority. Godwin’s endorsement of private individual judgment is a helpful safeguard against the tyranny of alleged expertise, where those who defer to the expert authority dogmatically obey such authority without subjecting it to critical examination. In order to preserve the legitimacy of expert authority in light of Godwin’s counterarguments, Bakunin’s description of legitimate authority must prevent inclusions of false authorities. In other words, it is important to recognize that the Bakuninian understanding of legitimate authority is one that encourages people to think and act for themselves, without having to surrender their autonomy of thought. Such an approach would require us to rely on the opinions of others not simply because they happen to be in authority, but because their authority is respectable, appreciable, and can contribute to the wellbeing of others rather than just their own. What constitutes legitimate authority therefore depends not only on the intentions and consequences of actions performed by the person in authority, but also on whomever is affected by or implicated in the power that is exercised by the person in authority.

II. Domination in the Four Spheres of Social Reality

The act of dominating (exercising illegitimate authority over) someone or something is a potentially self-perpetuating endeavor, in that its establishment creates conditions for further acts of domination. The routinization of domination is thereby made possible both conceptually and institutionally. Both conceptual and institutional manifestations of domination can be routinized through habits of thought and normalized by legal and moral inscriptions (e.g., the rule of law). Structural violence is the result of routinized domination, where domination is socially conditioned, naturalized, internalized (by those who are affected by it), and institutionalized. These various ways that structural violence is planted in our social reality can create an impression that domination is so pervasive that a genuinely equal and just society is practically impossible. In beginning to address structural forms of domination, we can start by
examining the ways in which domination is routinized in different aspects of social reality. In *The Impossible Community: Realizing Communitarian Anarchism* (2013), philosopher John Clark conceptualizes four overlapping spheres of social reality that are not mutually exclusive. He discusses how domination restricts the development of both negative and positive forms of freedom in these four spheres of social reality. Negative freedom consists of freedom *from* coercion, whereas positive freedom includes the freedom *to* self-determine and the freedom *to* flourish as human beings.\(^\text{15}\)

The four spheres of social reality that he discusses include: social ideology, social imaginary, social ethos, and social institutions. These four categories should not be understood as fixed categories, but as fluid categories that allow for a more analytical discussion about authority and domination, and the effects that they have on social life. In the following passages, I will discuss how domination can be routinized in Clark’s four spheres of social reality, ranging from ideology all the way to social institutions. Given the theoretical abstractness of these terms, I will provide concrete examples in order to ground my discussion on social issues and illustrate how domination is a deeply entrenched social phenomenon.

**Social Ideology**

Beginning with a discussion of *social ideology* is perhaps the most accessible way to present these four spheres of social reality, since, as Clark claims, it has received the most amount of attention from traditional leftist critiques. One of the most influential critiques of ideology is perhaps the account provided by Marx and Engels, who claim that the ideas of the ruling class inevitably become the ruling ideas of each era. They understand ideology in the pejorative sense because it functions as the “ideal expression” of existing social relationships.\(^\text{16}\) Similar to Marx and Engels’ thinking, Clark defines “social ideology” as a system of ideas that purports to accurately depict reality, when in fact it is a “systematic

\(^{15}\) Clark, *The Impossible Community*, 94.

distortion of reality on behalf of some particularistic interest or some system of differential power." He claims that ideology can manifest across areas such as economics, politics, race, sex, nationalism, statism, and science. Contemporary neoliberal capitalist ideology, for instance, is based on the implicit idea that production and consumption are optimal ways to organize social life. Ideology in this sense is significant because it underlies the ideas that are used in justifiable domination performed by powerful authorities. These authorities can use ideology to distract the public from addressing domination, or in manipulating the public to believe that their domination is justifiable because of such-and-such alleged reasons.

Theory surrounding wage labor is another example of ideology, where the performance of labor is reduced to an exchangeable commodity under a system of production and consumption. Ideologically, the exchange of labor for a relatively fixed wage is viewed as a fair exchange, when in fact it functions to extract the value accrued in the exchange from the wage-earner to the owners of capital. The primary motive for production is not necessarily to serve the needs of people, but the creation of wealth for select individuals in giving rise to economic domination. Concentrations of wealth are created in this fundamentally unequal exchange, restricting access to privilege and need-satisfaction. Capitalist labor is also based on the ideological assumption that human production under a market system is the most optimal order, because of the presupposed need for consumption. In all levels of a wage labor system, "work ethics" and similar ideal expressions are used as means of reward and punishment to subordinate and discipline the worker in submitting to the ends of production and consumption, doing so without giving much thought to whether the workers actually enjoy performing the tasks demanded of them. A large part of the population is driven to pursue occupations that they may secretly despise, partially attributable to the deeply indoctrinating effects of the ideology of wage labor. Clark claims that ideology can be inculcated through platforms such as the mass media, newspapers, magazines, the radio, the

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17 Clark, *The Impossible Community*, 36.
18 Ibid, 98.
19 Ibid, 36.
advertising industry, schools and universities, and churches. It is widely known, for example, that the advertising industry contributes to the ideology of consumption by creating consumerist desire for trivial products. In general, social ideology is a system of ideas that is used to describe reality motivated by certain consequences that it would presumably bring about, oftentimes in favor of larger structures of power that have a vested influence over platforms such as education, the mass media, and other means of disseminating information and knowledge within a society; these platforms can be used by authorities to spread ideologies and maintain relationships of domination without widespread resistance.

Social Imaginary

Social imaginary is a society’s “collective fantasy life,” which includes socially conditioned impressions of the “self,” “other,” commodities, and objects. These socially conditioned impressions can range from images and symbols used in everyday life, to “prevailing myths and paradigmatic narratives.” In a way, social imaginary can both broaden and limit the scope of social ideology and general attitudes toward convention and social change. For instance, the 20th century witnessed upheavals in the global social imaginary, particularly with the two major World Wars and the subsequent period of Cold War marked by bitter ideological hostility. The Second World War in particular strengthened already-existing skepticism of the colonial imaginaries of the European “self” and the colonized “other.” The following period of decolonization is a testimony to the continual subversion of the colonial social imaginary. The Cold War is an interesting case of how two major ideological camps have cultivated the social imaginary of the “self” and the “other” in nationalist terms. Cold War imaginary helped foment a new culture of military invasion and occupation, along with the legacy of nuclear warfare that continues to pose an existential threat to life on Earth. Whereas ideology is a system of ideas used to distort reality, social imaginary contributes to the cultural make-up of society through

20 Ibid, 35.
social conditioning and mental habituation. Socially conditioned symbols and myths about race, gender, class, and colonialism are used as an effort to normalize domination, and to systematically marginalize contrasting views and voices. Not conforming to the views of dominant social imaginary can result in exclusion or other forms of social sanctioning.

Social dimensions of desire, need, and demand can also be implicated or fabricated in social imaginary, such as a crass consumerist social imaginary that valorizes material acquisition. The critique of consumerist social imaginary here extends only to consumption that is carried out thoughtlessly. Products that provide momentary excitement or convenience are advertised without attention to the potential harm that they may have on social wellbeing, health, and the environment. Non-renewable energy, for example, is used in compartmentalized systems of transportation and industry, offering private cars even in densely populated areas. Philosopher John Dewey warned of how “power today resides in control of the means of production, exchange, publicity, transportation and communication,” to the extent that “whoever owns them rules the life of the country.” Much like Dewey observed at his time, centralized control over the means of exchange has been shown to limit the scope of discourse by narrowing our perspectives and conditioning us to accept a particular narrative frame of mind. The media conglomerate system performs this task especially well, especially under monopolistic conditions when media outlets are owned by a handful of companies. With the advent of electronic devices such as televisions, computers, and smartphones, it is much easier to consolidate a dominant social imaginary by centralizing the spread of information. The consolidation of a social imaginary can potentially help to legitimize domination. In the case of the media monopoly, attention is given to certain news topics that oftentimes do not represent the interest of the general public. Viewers and audiences are treated as passive observers who consume the news and become increasingly desensitized to acts of domination.

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21 Ibid.
Clark refers to this spectacle as a “consumptionist imaginary” that is closely connected with the other three spheres of ideology, ethos, and institutions.²³

**Social Ethos**

*Social ethos* is the practical disposition of any society or group of people, given their habit of thought, practice, ritual, and way of life. For Clark, social ethos concerns the synthesizing of “ideas, beliefs, images, symbols, rituals, practices, habits, and organizational forms.”²⁴ In a way, social ethos straddles thought and action. It enables social life to occur more seamlessly through gradual habituation, for better or for worse, by creating more predictable patterns that regiment our behavior. Habits of behavior are not only limited to what is said and done, but also relate to the permissible spectrum of thought and action. In contrast to social ideology and imaginary, social ethos deals with the more practical dimensions of social reality. For example, the ideology of wage labor and the social imaginary of commodities help to sustain an ethos of working hard and being a productive worker. The ethos of being a productive worker is symbolic of the degree of subordination of worker to demands of production and consumption. In such a case, work itself is a mode of life always characterized by the end product that is produced rather than any intrinsic satisfaction that accompanies the process itself. Being “productive,” “efficient,” and a “good worker” are characteristics cultivated in the individual ethos by the dominant ideology and social imaginary, which relies on structures of authority and domination that are in place.

In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990), anthropologist historian James C. Scott uses two metaphors to describe contrasting sets of performances onstage and offstage as part of our social ethos. He uses the metaphor of “public transcript” to describe the former category of performances, and “hidden transcript” to describe the latter category of performances. Public transcripts are usually displayed openly (“onstage”) as tacit forms of misrepresentation “designed to be impressive, to affirm

²³ Clark, *The Impossible Community*, 37.
²⁴ Ibid, 38.
and naturalize the power of dominant elites, and to conceal or euphemize the dirty linen of their rule."  

They are respectable gestures that reinforce a hierarchical order or domination, such as in the case when a colonized person obeys a colonizer, or when a subordinate bows to a boss in showing respect. These acts of deference and obedience can sometimes be genuine, but they represent performances that help to reinforce structures of domination. To describe the latter category of “offstage” performances, namely the notion of “hidden transcript,” Scott describes attitudes and behavior that occur beyond the limelight of domination, and beyond the direct observation of the powerful. These attitudes and behaviors are subversive acts that can amount to challenges against the dominant social ethos, because normative obedience to certain authorities is undermined. When a group of enslaved people expresses solidarity with one another in their living quarters, they are silently rebelling against the ethos (along with ideology, social imaginary, and institution) of slavery. As social ethos becomes structured into the very organs of a society, it manifests as formal and large-scale apparatuses that regulate social life. They become institutionalized.

Social Institutions

Similar to ideology, “institution” is commonly used in social studies, because it appears to be the “most obvious determinant and constituent of social reality.” Institutions are collective practices that are established to achieve an alleged set of goals. They are systematized “habits” and norms of a society that differ from social ethos, because the objectives of institutions are much more rigid and defined, and are usually enshrined in legal statutes or mandates. A corporate institution, for example, has the objective of running a business successfully and to make profits through business. However, as in other spheres of social reality, the consequences of institutional objectives can run into direct conflict with the interests of

26 Ibid, 4.
27 Clark, The Impossible Community, 34.
the constituents that it purports to serve. Corporate institutions are no different, because their interests sometimes conflict with the common good belonging to the general public.

Institutional goals of corporations can clash with the interests of particular groups of people, society at large, or even with the entire ecological environment. ExxonMobil’s (then known separately as Exxon and Mobil) cover-up of scientific evidence of anthropogenic climate change in the 1980s\(^{28}\) is an example of a conflict of interest. The profit motive of a for-profit fossil fuel corporation and the interests of the general public in safeguarding a clean environment are at stake in this specific example. The institutional goal of ExxonMobil dictates that it must value its profits over interests in addressing climate change or in putting a halt to the destruction of the environment. In classical economics studies, however, ExxonMobil’s institutional goal is disproportionately valued over the potential harm that it may bring—pollution of the environment is diagnosed as a lamentable “externality” that cannot be remedied or prevented, but only remissibly reduced. Besides the environment, institutional domination can also relate to other aspects pertaining to race, gender, and class.

Underlying all four spheres of social reality is the potential for illegitimate forms of authority to occur. In all four spheres, authority can be systematically imposed upon social life in order to subordinate social life to what is demanded by the authority. In most cases, domination is carried out in manners that seem to permeate the very fabric of social reality. Domination thus appears to be an unavoidable element of social life. However, if we consider domination in light of the four spheres of social reality that Clark discerns, we see that domination is neither a necessary nor an inevitable consequence of social life. It is rather a historical contingency that both informs and is informed by the four spheres of social reality. Domination can also be understood as a tendency in philosophical thinking throughout the history of

philosophy, which helps to solidify structures of authority and domination in ideology, social imaginary, social ethos, and institutions.

In an attempt to understand the philosophical roots of domination, Val Plumwood explores domination in her Feminism and the Mastery of Nature (1993) and Environmental Culture (2002) as a definite trend in the history of philosophical thinking, tracing back to the ideas of luminaries such as Plato and Descartes. In her works, Plumwood systematically deconstructs the dualisms in the history of philosophy by demonstrating how dualisms function to justify the existence of power structures based on hierarchies. She demonstrates how these structures of power—whether they are androcentric, ethnocentric, or anthropocentric—have allowed for domination to occur by separating individuals into two homogenous categories of male/female, civilize/primitive, reason/nature, and so on. In the next section of this chapter, I will discuss Plumwood’s critique of the logic of domination keeping in mind Clark’s four spheres of social reality. My purpose here is to highlight the hegemonic status of domination and its philosophical roots. Doing so will prompt a discussion of anti-authoritarian alternatives to domination in the following chapter, Chapter 2.

III. Dualism: The Logical Structure of Domination

Domination can intersect matters related to class, race, gender, and the environment. Plumwood refers to this intersection metaphorically in her liberation theory as the “four tectonic plates” of domination. Making explicit connections between these four areas of domination can help to identify the common logical frameworks used to justify domination. According to Plumwood, it is important in such a process to pay attention to forms of “centrism” unique to different instances of domination. For example, in cases of colonial and racial domination, we can refer to the logical framework of ethnocentrism, whereas in cases of patriarchic domination, we can detect androcentric ways of thinking.

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at work. As a historically male-dominated discipline, philosophy has largely struggled to sufficiently challenge these forms of centrism, instead operating under frameworks that privilege notions of masculinity, racism, and anthropocentrism. Plumwood describes these forms of centrism as denials of experiences other than one’s own, where other experiences are systematically neglected or treated as inferior. She argues that this creates potential “blindspots” that allow for domination to occur as we turn a blind eye to the sufferings of others.\textsuperscript{30}

To address these potential blindspots in the history of philosophy, Plumwood’s account of the logic of domination seeks to wholly unmask the practice of domination by linking the oppression of women to environmental domination, whilst maintaining an understanding of other critical issues in race, class, and hetero-patriarchy. In rebelling against the philosopher-kings in traditional philosophy, Plumwood’s analysis of the logic of domination offers a salient critique of the logical foundation that intersectional domination is built upon. Plumwood connects the logical foundation of domination to forms of dualism in the history of philosophy, and, in response to dualism, provides non-dualist and non-hierarchical alternatives. The affinity between domination and dualism that Plumwood discerns, along with the four spheres of reality that Clark discusses, provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how beliefs and practices are used by illegitimate authority in routinizing domination.

In \textit{Feminism and the Mastery of Nature}, Plumwood distinguishes between notions of “distinction,” “dichotomy,” and “dualism.” She notices that in the former two instances, a relationship is established between two kinds of things, or a range of things, to allow human beings to communicate more effectively and navigate through daily life with greater ease. For it is hard to imagine living life without having to use language to distinguish between things, because it is such a fundamental tool for humans to organize and present knowledge—in differentiating between a “this” and a “that,” and in drawing

emphasis to specific things at specific times in allotting our limited attention given our finite cognitive capacities. Communication and language itself is perhaps one of the most wondrous aspects of the human experience, and they can allow us to express powerful sentiments such as empathy and compassion. However, communication and language can also be abused as means to justify domination.

In contrast to mere distinction and dichotomy, Plumwood proposes that dualism represents attempts to impose upon relationship notions of superiority and inferiority. In dualism, the actual or supposed qualities, culture, values and areas of life associated with a dualized other are “systematically and pervasively constructed and depicted as inferior.” Dualism therefore represents a hierarchical system that is socially constructed, to the extent that domination is conceptually legitimized, where “the inferiorized group (unless it can marshal cultural resources for resistance) must internalise this inferiorization in its identity.” The habit of thinking in dualistic terms perpetuates domination by endowing certain groups of people with the authority to impose notions of superiority and inferiority in a given relationship. Plumwood diagnoses this problem of dualism by teasing apart the procedures involved in the making of it, which she summarizes in five terms: radical exclusion, denial and backgrounding of the inferiorized group, homogenization, incorporation, and instrumentalization of the inferiorized group.

“Radical exclusion,” for Plumwood, is a key indicator of dualism because it functions beyond distinctions that are made in ordinary language. In contrast to mere distinctions, dualisms are grounded upon the creation of two radically separate terms, where one is conceived as superior and the other as inferior. The resultant radical separation between the dualized terms, which Plumwood calls “hyperseparation,” defines the “dominant identity against or in opposition to the subordinated identity, by exclusion of their real or supposed qualities.” In order to maintain the illusion of extreme

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31 Ibid, 47.
32 Ibid.
33 Plumwood, Environmental Culture, 102.
separateness between the dominant and inferiorized, the dominant members are foregrounded along with the denial of their dependency on the inferiorized members. Since the contributions made by the inferiorized members are systematically denied and treated as a background for the successes of the ruling masters, the inferiorized members—who are all originally irreducible constituents of a larger group—are reduced to a homogenized entity. Thus, the inferiorized group becomes treated as a mere periphery for the centers of power represented by the ruling masters, where the master’s qualities “are taken as primary, and as defining social value, while those of the slave are defined or constrained in relation to them, often as negations or lacks of the virtues of the centre.”

The incorporation of the inferiorized periphery to the empire-building projects of the ruling masters establishes conditions for domination to occur on a regular basis, such that domination becomes routinized. The logic of dualism culminates in the conclusion that the inferiorized group can be objectified as an expendable instrument “harnessed to the master’s purposes and needs.” The wife as a property of her husband, the colonized as a slave of the colonizers, the productive worker as a cog in the capitalists’ productive machinery—these are all examples that Plumwood uses to illustrate the logic of dualism at play.

In Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, Plumwood traces the genealogy of dualism within the history of philosophy. She begins this discussion by identifying the “marriage of reason and domination” in the works of Plato, focusing on the dualisms of reason/nature, the soul/body, and the myth of the “Forms” in the Republic, Timaeus, and Phaedo. In these works, women, foreign “barbarians,” the body, animals, and any aspects associated with “nature” are inferiorized and subordinated to the masters’ project of domination. According to Plumwood, Descartes’ mind/body dualism extended Plato’s dualisms by further separating physicality from a presupposed “soul” or “mind.”

34 Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 52.
36 Ibid, 72.
37 Ibid, 77.
38 Ibid, 104-119.
other dualisms is incorporated into this project of domination: male/female, white/black, public/private, subject/object, self/other, universal/particular, freedom/necessity, civilized/primitive, mental/manual, and production/reproduction, and so on.\(^3\) Plumwood suggests that, throughout the history of philosophy, dualisms have been utilized in order to assign notions of inherent superiority and inferiority, and to justify forms of domination based on illegitimate authority. An examination of the history of different forms of domination can serve as a practical example of how the logic of dualism conceptually legitimized domination on a global scale.

*Imperial Domination.* In the history of colonial-imperialism, ethnocentric dualisms are used to construct mythologies and false narratives regarding race and the conquest of “primitive” societies by the “civilized.” The construction of narratives such as the “white man’s burden” helped to justify colonial domination, specifically relating to the dehumanizing practices that allowed the colonizers to subjugate and enslave the colonized. Edward Said claims that in the colonial social imaginary, the “Oriental people” (viz., the colonized people) are to be dealt with as a Platonic essence, such that they must be treated as a homogenous group that is intellectually inferior to the colonizers, who represent the superior term within the civilized/primitive dualism. According to this logic, the colonizers, who are “natural logicians,” is radically different from and superior to the colonized, who are “singularly deficient in the logical faculty.”\(^4\) In addition to civilized/primitive dualisms, reason/emotion and mind/body dualisms are also reified as part of the colonial social imaginary, allowing two social groups to be treated as radically separate from one another and internally homogenous. Given the superior rational faculties possessed by the colonizers, it is only natural for them to dominate and rule over the colonized people.

Manifestations of the colonial imaginary in the American continents over the past two to three centuries is an example of ethnocentric dualisms employed in the context of imperial domination. The

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\(^3\) Ibid, 43-45.

domination of the indigenous people and enslaved Africans by settler-colonists in the Americas is an instance of colonial dualisms being employed, where the colonizers attributed to themselves superior qualities and self-legitimized their acts of domination. Characteristics such as rationality and religious righteousness are emphasized as features of the colonizers that indicated their inherent superiority, which in turn help justify their colonial domination in the Americas. For instance, the United States has historically acquired its imperial prowess and material affluence largely based on a social imaginary that systematically denies the worth of indigenous Americans, black Americans, and enslaved Africans. Such a social imaginary contributed to extreme forms of violence and domination, including mass killings of the indigenous people (mainly through the introduction of non-native diseases) and the institution of slavery. More generally, the invasion of the Americas justified by the “white man’s burden” ideology functioned to legitimize the deaths of the indigenous population, and to position the settler-colonizers at the center of power given their ethnocentric superiority. Subsequent enslavements of predominantly African slaves is largely based upon racial dualisms (viz., white/black or white/colored dualisms) constructed by the colonizers, which institutionalized the practice of coerced labor given the subhuman status assigned to Africans. Under the dualist frameworks of white/black, the slaveholders treated the enslaved people as mere commodities, which are instruments in the slaveholders’ projects to amass personal wealth and to further their gains in the newly formed colonies.

The United States was founded upon the “Columbian Exchange” that gave rise to the transatlantic network of domination. These networks of domination gave rise to the institution of chattel slavery and labor plantation camps. Specifically, the Columbian Exchange gave rise to new ways for

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41 The “Columbian Exchange” is a terminology first used in Alfred W. Crosby’s The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972). In this work, Crosby discusses the ecological implications of the voyages spearheaded by Christopher Columbus, where invasive species and infectious diseases are carried from the Afro-Eurasian “Old World” to the so-called “New World,” killing predominantly indigenous people in the Americas and paving the way for the transatlantic slave trade. Crosby claims that the repercussions of such an exchange were profound, such that it has “left us with not a richer but a more impoverished genetic pool” (219). He proposes that the extinctions that otherwise would have taken a million years have been exponentially sped up by such an exchange.
domination to be routinized based on the sugar-plantation complex, which served as a blueprint for subsequent models of factories, labor camps, and concentration camps. Similar to the mercantile spice trade in the “Old World,” exceedingly high profits that plantation owners could reap from sugar was “valuable enough to justify the purchase of slaves” in running sugar plantations. In the colonial social imaginary, the enslaved and indigenous people are conceived and depicted as “savages” or “uncivilized,” which are radically separated from the spheres of reason that the colonizers associated themselves with. Dualisms of civilized/primitive and master/slave therefore become ideologically effective in justifying the ethos and institution of sugar plantations. Indigenous people “were not seen as ecological agents, and their land was taken over as unoccupied, ‘terra nullius’ (no-one’s land), while the heroic agency of white pioneers in ‘discovering,’ clearing and transforming the land was strongly stressed.” Every feature ascribed to the colonizers was to be extolled and idealized, while anything associated with the colonized or enslaved people were to be denied, devalued, instrumentalized, or eradicated.

Economic Domination. Domination in plantation labor did not only rely on colonial and imperial forms of domination, but also implicated economic forms of domination. Dualisms such as master/slave and mind/body are especially potent in contributing slave labor and wage labor since the formation of plantation labor. These dualisms of master/slave and mind/body are refined into more elaborate dualisms such as mental/manual, which create new forms of hierarchies associated with the forms of wage labor concerned; for instance, the ideology of mental labor as inherently superior to manual labor. These dualisms subordinate the laborer’s work to the demands of external authorities or institutional forces, all of which function to compel the worker (who has little to no choice but) to toil in order to sustain a livelihood. Any labor that is compelled by external forces likely interferes with the worker’s inner

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43 Plumwood, Environmental Culture, 104.
aspirations, and is oftentimes paralleled with the expropriation of the product of labor from the laborer to such external forces. Hence, it is said that “no form of wage-labor, even though one may be less obnoxious than another, can do away with the misery of wage-labor itself.”\(^4\) The labor performed by the worker is not self-directed, but is instead subsumed under an authority figure that determines the conditions and outcomes of the worker’s labor.

Economic domination in the form of wage labor concerns the institution of capital, which generally structures domination through the expansion and reproduction of value.\(^4\) The resulting concentration of wealth sustains the authorities’ powers, and simultaneously “dictates that the human good and the natural good are subordinated to the demands of capital.”\(^4\) Division of labor is institutionalized in order to satisfy the growing demands of capitalist expansion, accompanied by the forceful enclosure of formerly bucolic areas in favor of urbanization and the herding of the rural people into the metropolitan centers. In such a process, “space itself becomes pervasively ideological,” because all things that exist are candidates to be commodified. According to Clark, the shopping mall represents a culminating landmark of the successes of economic domination, because it contributes to the “values of consumption and the harnessing of desire (repressive sublimation)” and the “mechanism of techno-bureaucratic control and instrumental rationality.”\(^4\)

The mind/body dualism left a profound impact on labor history, and is tied to other dualisms such as production/reproduction and mental/manual. For instance, the preference of the mind over the body has contributed to the privileging of mental labor over manual forms of labor. Happening concurrent to the enclosure of rural farmlands and the urbanization of city-centers was the creation of a hierarchy of wage-labor. Such a hierarchy was based on the dualism of mental/manual and production/reproduction. The work performed by intellectuals and managers are foregrounded and

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\(^4\) Clark, *The Impossible Community*, 34.
\(^4\) Ibid, 98.
\(^4\) Ibid, 100-103.
valorized, whereas the work performed by manual workers and petty bureaucrats is depreciated and pushed to the background. Within the existing social ethos and institutions, mental labor is monetarily rewarded whereas manual labor is socially stigmatized and economically undervalued. More extreme forms of mental/manual and production/reproduction can be observed in the working conditions of slave labor, where workers are pushed to the bounds of destitution and despair that they are willing to accept grotesque working conditions under systems of economic domination.

In the Americas, for instance, fresh produce found in supermarkets is oftentimes dependent on the toil of migrant workers working under dehumanizing working conditions, while the shareholders and owners of the agricultural companies and the supermarkets can obtain disproportionate profits. In an ethnographic work by Seth Holmes, he documents how the systematic instrumentalization of migrant labor is “characterized by a physical and temporal separation of the processes of reproduction of labour force and the production from that labour force.” Migrant workers that he spent time with are forced to migrate because of the structural violence caused by the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which destroyed the Mexican corn industry and paved the way for an influx of subsidized corn that profited United States agribusinesses. Holmes’ ethnographic work demonstrates that economic domination is still a widespread phenomenon in social reality. Although the working conditions of wage laborers have generally improved throughout human history, the nature of economic domination has prevailed over time, from the establishment of plantations to the institution of contemporary labor camps that produce fresh fruits and vegetables. The poor working conditions that Holmes’ ethnography describes demonstrate that modern state capitalism can be thought of as “a newer version of slavery,” where “instead of people selling us or renting us we rent out ourselves.”

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Gender Domination. In her critique of dualism, Plumwood is critical of forms of androcentrism that persist in dualist ways of thinking. She is critical of both the male/female dualism and the general subordination of women in patriarchic society. The dualism of male/female provides an ideological basis for other dualisms such as reason/nature, reason/emotion, production/reproduction, and freedom/necessity. According to these dualist terms, women are associated with nature, emotion, reproduction, and irrationality, whereas men are viewed as champions of reason, production, and freedom. It is not by coincidence that the primary creators of and contributors to these dualisms have been male philosophers throughout the history of philosophy. After all, the discipline itself is a product of its own times, and has been conditioned by a hetero-patriarchic social reality. Plumwood cites examples of philosophers who have contributed to these dualist terms, among them Hegel, Rousseau, Plato, Descartes, and Marx.\(^{50}\) The male-dominated demography of traditional philosophy means that the ideas and perspectives considered within the discipline have historically been restricted. Moreover, it also reinforces the deprivation of opportunity (within the discipline) that women generally suffer from.

Dualisms such as male/female do not only systematically disempower women, but also promote a hetero-normative social reality. Such ideology claims that females are deficient in “reason” and “rational” faculties, aspects that are glorified from the ideas of Plato to the emphasis of reason by Enlightenment philosophers such as Rousseau. Women are thus treated as necessary objects only for reproductive and domestic purposes. Contrastingly, what men can perform is valorized as the “reason” ideally possessed by a philosopher-king, as having a “universal ingredient” that is essential to the making of autonomous agents responsible for “the work of civilization.”\(^{51}\) Women are systematically inferiorized and coerced into involuntary submission under these dualist conceptions of male/female, which at the same time presuppose a binary hetero-patriarchic framework that denies the humanity of those who are non-binary, androgynous, transgender, queer, and so on. Without exaggerating the importance of

\(^{50}\) Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 45.

\(^{51}\) Ibid, 19.
identity and cultural politics, these individual experiences are also systematically repressed under a hetero-patriarchic social reality. Ideologically, these identity categories are portrayed as fixed and internally homogenous, with no acknowledgement of the potential diversity, fluidity, and continuity between the different labels imposed upon unique individual experiences.

*Racial Domination.* Using similar dualist frameworks as in imperial, economic, and gender dualisms, racial dualisms are also employed in legitimating domination and structural violence against targeted groups. Like other dualisms, racial dualisms function to legitimate and support domination. Contemporary dualisms of white/black and white/colored are examples of racial dualisms that are used to ideologically safeguard existing inequality between the global north and the global south, to generalize slightly. These racial dualisms are a reflection of past ideologies, social imaginary, social ethe, and institutions that are characteristically ethnocentric; namely, the idea that contemporary racial domination is a continuation of the history of colonialism and slavery globally. Pervasive forms of racial inequality in housing, education, employment, political participation, and mass incarceration are potential indicators of the legacy of colonialism and slavery.

In the contemporary United States, for example, black Americans and indigenous Americans are still treated as racial underclasses. Territorially, the native people are marginalized and confined to living in reservations, which function to segregate them from the land that they were violently displaced from in the process of settler-colonization. Effects of the history of racial disaccumulation are often downplayed with the help of contemporary structural racism in the form of mass incarceration and racial poverty, to the extent that “the majority of white Americans today do not comprehend the multiple ways in which their lives are enhanced by a legacy of unequal advantage.”52 The critique of white privilege here is not used as an accusatory claim against white individuals, but merely to suggest that the

inequality of conditions still persists given the legacy and history of slavery and settler-colonialism. However, it is always possible to negate the effects of racial dualisms by recognizing, as Du Bois suggests, that “human nature is not simple and any classification that roughly divides [people] into good and bad, superior and inferior, slave and free, is and must be ludicrously untrue and universally dangerous as a permanent exhaustive classification.”

Ecological Domination. Intersecting with the dualist ideologies in imperial, economic, gender, and racial domination are ecological forms of domination. Some examples of ecological domination include practices such as mass deforestation, pollution, habitat destruction, and the current anthropogenic climate change. Anthropocentric dualisms of human/nature, culture/nature, reason/nature and rationalism/animalism are employed to justify ecological domination, where “nature” is conceived homogenously as a single entity that is lacking any superior qualities of culture and reason possessed by humans. These qualities are oftentimes used alongside androcentric and ethnocentric forms of dualisms in order to relegate women and other inferiorized social groups as belonging to “nature,” thereby allowing them to be dominated as well given their subhuman status. Under anthropocentric and ethnocentric dualisms together, for instance, the “rational and civilized Western centers of the world economy” took on the role to regulate labor, measurements, security, and social welfare, whereas overseas zones consisted of “plunder, coerced labor, and limited rights.” Colonization of indigenous people also meant that they were homogenizes as part of “nature,” which, along with indigenous land, can be used as instruments for the colonizers to “remake the colonised and their space in the image of the

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54 Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 43.
55 Ibid, 105.
coloniser’s own self-space, own culture or land, which is represented as the paradigm of reason, beauty and order.”

The inferiorization and instrumentalization of the indigenous people continues even today. The ongoing assault on the remnants of indigenous communities, as seen in the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock in North Dakota, is symbolic of the degree to which native people are inferiorized and denied control of their living environment. Ecological domination is thus coupled with other forms of domination such as racial and economic domination. Denial of indigenous self-determination and their right to enjoy decent living conditions is evident in how peaceful demonstrations in Standing Rock are repressed by state authorities, using violent means such as “rubber bullets, tear gas, concussion grenades, sound cannons, water cannons in subfreezing temperatures, and other military-style weapons that have injured hundreds of people.” The instrumentalization of indigenous people and the environment demonstrates the logical calculus of contemporary state capitalism, where profits amassed by businesses invested in the pipeline project outweighs the value of the living conditions of the indigenous people and the environment in general, which is a common good. In contrast to reductionist views of the environment as a resource, indigenous conceptions of the land are rooted in human connection with the land rather than to viewing land as an exploitable commodity, object, or property. Situated in such a context, the Standing Rock protests represent a long tradition of struggle against settler-colonialism that intersects with struggles against domination in race, class, and environmental justice. These forms of domination are connected in Plumwood’s critique of the “four tectonic plates” of domination.

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56 Plumwood, Environmental Culture, 105.
Legal Domination. Domination in any form can always potentially be legalized by governmental regulations. In instances such as lowering the minimum wage, mass incarceration, and the barring of women’s suffrage, domination associated with class, race, and gender are legitimized through the law, making them more difficult to be resisted and challenged. In these scenarios, the socially constructed dualism of legal/illegal is employed by state authorities to normalize and enforce domination, such as by instituting a lower minimum wage (real wages) in order to maintain economic domination and inequality. The perversity of the legal/illegal dualism lies in the fact that state-sanctioned violence is seen as legitimate and legal, whereas acts of civil disobedience, petty crimes, destructions of “private property,” and the crossing of borders in fleeing war and poverty are seen as illegal. In other words, the dualism of legal/illegal can be employed by the state in the name of diminishing petty individual crimes, whilst allowing the state to act as the greatest criminal itself, by breaking international laws, expropriating social wealth, and normalizing structural violence.58

One of these institutional organs deployed by the state with the aid of the legal/illegal dualism is the institution of the national border. National borders are instruments that radically separate people who are legally considered a “natural citizen” of a country, and those who are considered as “aliens.” The existence of the former within the national borders is legal, whereas the existence of the latter is rendered ambiguous or illegalized. In a way, borders are used to produce “insiders and outsiders, and establish a system to control whose movement is acceptable and whose is not.”59 The legal/illegal dualism is one of the ultimate dualisms that the state has employed in routinizing domination on an institutional level, oftentimes normalizing domination to the degree that it becomes structural violence.

In considering the forms of domination that arise from dualist and hierarchical ontologies, non-dualist and non-hierarchical alternatives should be explored in helping to reconstruct social reality without domination. New social realities can be constructed in the spheres of ideology, social imaginary, social ethos, and institutions that we have discussed in context of Clark’s work. To explore such a possibility, I will discuss in the next chapter Plumwood’s “counter-hegemonic” framework that provides a non-dualist and non-hierarchical alternative to domination and dualism. I will also look at the ideas of Kropotkin and Malatesta in order to elaborate on our discussion of authority in Chapter 1. Building on Godwin and Bakunin, Kropotkin and Malatesta’s ideas can help to provide alternate values that challenge authority, which can help to ground social life based on practices of mutual aid and solidarity instead of competition and conflict. After considering Plumwood, Kropotkin, and Malatesta’s ideas, I will turn to the contributions made by John Dewey, especially his understanding of democratic self-organization. Discussing Dewey’s conception of democratic self-organization will allow me to transition my discussion to a case study of a social movement (Chapter 3), the Umbrella Movement, where I elaborate on notions of authority, domination, and self-organization with the help of empirical observation and ethnographic insight.
Chapter 2

Alternatives to Domination

“It’s much better to do good in a way that no one knows anything about it.”

— Lev N. Tolstoy

In this chapter, I will build on Plumwood and Clark’s critiques of domination by drawing from the works of anti-authoritarian (or anarchist) philosophers, including Kropotkin, Malatesta, and John Dewey. My intention here is contribute to a political philosophy that sees state authority not as a necessary structure to human life, but as at best a historical contingency that should be dismantled or reconstructed if domination persists. I will begin the chapter by discussing Plumwood’s response to the logic of domination, and then substantiate her non-dualist framework by proposing the idea that authority itself is contingent. Plumwood’s response to domination not only avoids dualistic ways of thinking, but also contributes to a discussion about anti-authoritarianism. Understanding her non-dualist framework in the context of anti-authoritarian philosophy will allow me to discuss her ideas in the context of authority. To do so, I will incorporate the ideas on democracy and anarchism and discuss the possibility for individuals to be directly involved in the creation of social reality through self-organization. The idea of self-organization is relevant and significant to my study of authority and domination, because it is markedly anti-authoritarian and non-dominating when carried out effectively. My discussion of self-organization in this chapter will prepare me for a case study of the Umbrella Movement in Chapter 3.
I. Non-Dualist Approach Against Domination

Plumwood’s “counter-hegemonic” standpoint is an effective tool to subverting the logic of domination elucidated in the previous chapter. In contrast to dualistic ways of organizing social reality, adopting a counter-hegemonic stance means to reorganize social reality on an egalitarian basis, without resorting to hierarchical structures based on dominating authorities. Plumwood suggests that an intentional recognition of both continuity and plurality can help to construct a non-dualist philosophy that explicitly rejects ontologies based on ranking or hierarchy. Plumwood’s counter-hegemonic standpoint not only provides non-dualist and non-hierarchical alternatives, but can also help address domination by allowing us to begin to “restore planetary balance and establish dialogical and carefully negotiated relationships.” In the following passages, I will discuss some of the key elements of Plumwood’s non-dualist approach: de-homogenization, foregrounding, non-instrumentalism, non-ranking, redistribution, and studying up. These ideas provide a foundation that can help in the process of reconstructing non-dominating social realities.

De-homogenization. Dualisms are reductive because they function to homogenize things into two distinct and hierarchical groups, where one group is privileged over the other. These two groups are conceived as remotely disparate categories when in fact they may share some similar qualities. Plumwood suggests that homogenizing ways of thinking can be avoided to prevent dualist and hierarchical ontologies, and that existing dualisms can be reconstructed by de-homogenizing the dualized terms. Dualized categories of male/female, for example, can be de-homogenized in recognizing the diversity and potential fluidity of gender experiences. De-homogenizing the different gender categories can help to avoid tendencies to essentialize gender qualities and to rank these qualities in a hierarchy. Anthropocentric notions of “nature” can also be de-homogenized in recognizing the internal diversity of

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61 Ibid, 167.
62 Ibid, 194.
the natural world, which includes the recognition of diversity within the human species itself. Plumwood suggests that de-homogenizing notions of “nature” also means to recognize that human experience is ecologically embedded, such that human experience is never separate from the environment.

The recognition of diversity in experience can help in de-homogenizing dualist terms pertaining to gender, race, and class. Dualisms such as hetero-/non-hetero-, self/other, and mental/manual can be replaced by a non-dualist ontological account. Rather than pushing inferiorized social groups to the background, Plumwood proposes that they should be foregrounded and recognized as heterogeneous. Recognizing the struggles historically faced by stereotyped groups and highlighting the internal diversity of such groups is important in rehabilitating social life without domination. The foregrounding of these groups would mean that they are no longer treated as mere instruments of the dominating authorities, but as unique individuals with their specific capabilities and needs. In a Kantian sense, individuals are not reduced as mere means to an external authority’s ends, but as “ends themselves.” Processes of de-homogenization can undermine the logic of domination by providing grounds for non-hierarchical philosophical outlooks, where any systems of rank are abandoned in favor of non-dualist and non-hierarchical alternatives.

Non-ranking. Contrary to any conceptual schema that relies on a system of ranking, Plumwood proposes an alternative ethical principle that she calls “non-ranking.” Non-ranking is one of the core ideas of Plumwood’s counter-hegemonic framework of thinking about the world. The idea not only entails the preemptive avoidance and minimization of systems based on rank, but also the creation of “[forms] of narratives and social arrangement which make ranking unnecessary.” As such, non-ranking is not just an abstract ethical principle, but also a way of life characterized by the refusal to subordinate our actions, thoughts, and perceptions to hierarchical arrangements. Such an approach entails not only the recognition of diversity between things (as in the process of de-homogenization), but also entails the

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63 Ibid, 120.
64 Ibid, 174.
dismantlement of systems of command and obedience, forms of centrisms, and species-related hierarchies. Plumwood is critical, for example, of the tendency to rank homogenized categories of “species” according to human-imposed standards.\textsuperscript{65} Non-ranking is important not only in resisting dualisms, but also avoiding the domination that arises because of the tendency to rank.

\textit{Redistribution}. One of the most deliberative and effective ways to address the effects of ranking is redistribution, including redistributions of power and resources to reduce the gap of inequality caused by ranking. Through persistent efforts of redistribution, power and resources can be allocated in a more egalitarian manner. Redistribution prioritizes need-satisfaction and the creation of decent living conditions, where resources are allocated according to need-based criteria. More radical means of redistribution would imply bottom-up forms of redistribution, where power and resources are not given to individuals by already-existing authorities, but through horizontal networks of exchanges that are non-hierarchical. Redistributing power can mean to adopt a balanced and prudent approach in foregrounding historically silenced voices, and to provide non-retributive reparations wherever appropriate.

\textit{Studying up}. Plumwood’s notion of “studying up” focuses on the epistemological standpoint of subordinate groups, which helps to clarify the reasons for redistributing power and resources. One of these reasons is because structuralized forms of domination simply cannot be addressed adequately without acts of redistribution, considering for instance how racial and class domination cannot be sufficiently addressed without redistributing wealth and access to privilege in a more equitable manner. Doing so does not mean that privileged social groups are systematically disadvantaged, but simply means that their disenfranchised counterparts are truly recognized as equals. By “studying up,” Plumwood means ways of understanding the production of knowledge as an enterprise that can potentially contribute to acts of redistribution rather than enhancing the power of existing authorities.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid, 194.
other words, the production of knowledge would not be used to further domination through forms of androcentrism, ethnocentrism, or anthropocentrism, but rather for the sake of creating more equal social and environmental conditions for everyone to flourish in.

II. Reconstructing Non-Dominating Social Realities

Plumwood’s counter-hegemonic standpoint is an egalitarian alternative to existing social realities predicated upon domination. New forms of social reality can be created without recourse to dualisms and domination, instead relying on non-hierarchical and self-directed forms of organization. Clark’s observation of movements such as Satyagraha and “disaster anarchism” demonstrate precisely how these new social realities emerge when individuals voluntarily associate in solidaristic manners. In the movements of Satyagraha and “disaster anarchism” that Clark cites, authorities are not treated as necessary components of social reality, as they normally would be under existing social realities, but as pockets of social reality that do not necessitate structures of authority and domination. People in these movements demonstrate that they are capable of defying authorities that they once obeyed out coercion, fear, and through social conditioning. In the case of the Satyagraha movement in India and Sri Lanka, it means the defiance against colonial and local authorities. Whereas in Clark’s observation of “disaster anarchism” following Hurricane Katrina, people have defied profiteers of disaster and the ineptitude of government authorities by practicing self-organization and mutual aid.66 In taking matters into their own hands, individuals have organized themselves as part of a movement, in the effort to rewrite the scripts of their own lives instead of living life under the preordained scripts written by their superiors and rulers. The movements that Clark describes demonstrate that individuals can make their own choices without being compelled by external authorities, attending to their own specific needs and capacities in the process of doing so.

66 Clark, The Impossible Community, 201.
In *The Impossible Community*, Clark describes the Satyagraha movement in Sri Lanka as an example of communitarian anarchism in practice, where self-organized individuals actively sought to prevent domination within their collective social reality. The practice of Satyagraha ("insisting truth," or described by Mahatma K. Gandhi as "love force"), as the name of the movement suggests, is related to a broader movement of Sarvodaya ("welfare of all") and swaraj ("self-rule"). By displacing statist and hierarchical organization through direct action, the Satyagraha movement has created non-statist and non-hierarchical social realities. These new social realities are then sustained through continuous efforts to prevent the rise of governmental rule and structural domination. As such, the Sarvodaya movement demonstrates the possibility of liberating forms of social organization, through "direct democratic decision-making by all the members of the local community and administered by their elected delegates." The movement itself is based on the experiences of anti-imperialist struggles for independence in India, with added influence from the philosophical anarchism sketched out in Gandhi’s political philosophy. Gandhi summarizes his belief of Sarvodaya and swaraj in three core values:

1. The good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. A lawyer’s work has the same value as the barber’s, as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. A life of labour, i.e. the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living.69

The first premise is an ethical value that Gandhi observes, which embodies the Sarvodaya movement in striving for the common good. Any suffering endured by one individual affects the larger whole, and any great achievement by one individual is indebted to contributions made by others. Seeing human life from this angle of interconnectedness, the second and third premises are natural corollaries of the first one, proposing that each person’s individual labor has irreducible value in its own right. The life of a

67 Ibid, 40.
68 Ibid, 233.
productive individual, without her labor being devalued, is a life that is worth living because of the
intrinsic satisfaction it brings. Living along the lines of these three values means that we are practicing
both Sarvodaya and swaraj through contributing to the common good and through self-rule. Although the
emphasis of these three premises is economical and labor-related, they can also be expanded to
understanding other areas such as race, gender, and the environment. It can be connected to Plumwood’s
critique of dualism, for instance, in challenging the separation between mental/manual forms of labor,
and the separation between male/female in the manner and conditions of their work. Furthermore, the
good of the individual is contained in the good of all, because the individual is always socially and
ecologically embedded. According to Clark, the Sarvodaya movement itself is specifically rooted in
communitarianism, with emphasis on religion, spirituality, asceticism, and nonviolence.\textsuperscript{70} The movement
is also based on a commitment to realize communitarian principles through methods of direct action and
nonviolent civil disobedience. As Clark demonstrates, the nonviolence that Gandhi recommends did not
amount to a dogmatic brand of pacifism, despite the stereotypes that nonviolence is typically associated
with. Nonviolence is a valuable strategy in the art of resisting domination, but in the face of mass state
violence or violence that threaten specific individuals, Gandhi recommends more violent forms of direct
action such as armed resistance or self-defense.\textsuperscript{71}

Clark’s case study of the Sarvodaya movement exhibits how Plumwood’s non-dualist framework
can be practically implemented, where non-dualist and non-hierarchical social realities are created.
Within these new social realities, individuals organize themselves based on self-determination oriented
around the common good. The four spheres of social reality are fundamentally reconstructed thereafter,
providing counter-ideologies and alternate forms of social imaginary, social ethos, and social institutions.
Plumwood’s non-dualist account is in itself an example of a counter-ideology, because it provides an
alternative framework to dualist ones that lead to dominating practices. Likewise, Clark’s case study of

\textsuperscript{70} Clark, \textit{The Impossible Community}, 221.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid, 225.
the *Sarvodaya* movement demonstrates how new forms of social ethos and institutions are constructed in place of existing ones based on domination. Specifically, the self-managed economy and assemblies of the *Sarvodaya* movement radically reconstruct social reality from a possessive individualistic and profit-based economic system to a solidarity economy.\textsuperscript{72} Such a transformation means that direct democracies are put into practice, which corresponds to the idea of *swaraj* (“self-rule”). Non-dominating spheres of social realities can mutually reinforce one another to enhance the ability of individuals and communities to self-organize.

The *Sarvodaya* movement and Gandhi’s three premises about labor are examples of non-dominating social realities. Both examples demonstrate that labor can be organized based on solidaristic practices rather than authoritarian ones. Under a solidarity economy, workers are not subordinated to the ends demanded by owners of capital. The workers instead participate in an industrial democracy where they have control over their working conditions and the allocation of the produced works. A system of industrial democracy would also require changes in social imaginary. Advertising firms and external authorities cannot create social conditions that lead to uninformed individuals and consumers. Instead, the democratic control of the means of production and exchange can help to reorient social imaginary according to the needs and common good of society at large. Non-dominating social ethos would mean that authorities are recognized as contingent social roles rather than as rigid designators. Subordinates in a hierarchy can always potentially challenge structures of authority. James C. Scott’s metaphor of “hidden transcript” is helpful in this regard (see Chapter 1, Section II), because it describes the kinds of attitude and behavior that are possible beyond the limelight of domination. Individuals who have habituated to obey certain authorities can revolt against these patterns of habituation to undermine domination. Once normalized obedience to authority is disrupted, a change in social ethos can be implemented to allow individuals within larger communities to reconstruct their experiences freely.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid, 232-233.
without the dictates of the authorities previously in place. These changes are also true of social institutions, because institutions that are aimed at achieving predetermined end goals dictated by some authority can be reoriented around self-determination and the common good. Free from the coercion of external authorities, individuals can practice self-determination and self-realization in orienting social reality to suit their own needs and the common good. Practices based on authoritative bondage can be broken down, and individuals can voluntarily organize to reassemble social organizations from the bottom-up.

John Dewey’s ideas of democracy and experience as reconstruction can help to further clarify how social reality can be transformed in non-dominating ways. Dewey’s democratic ideal can be particularly powerful when considered alongside Plumwood’s non-dualist approach and Clark’s understanding of communitarian anarchism. Similar to the ideas proposed by the latter two philosophers, Dewey’s democratic ideal is based on a commitment to avoid domination by avoiding dualisms and hierarchies, and to reconstruct experiences that are non-dominating. Specifically, he discussed the possibility of creating free and unhindered experiences that preserves the social harmony in the face of authority. In his 80th birthday speech, Dewey defines democracy as based on the faith that every human being is irreducibly priceless “irrespective of race, color, sex, birth and family, of material or culture wealth.” Such faith in the democratic ideal is a belief that everyone is capable of acting as a leader of their own lives, a life that is “free from coercion and imposition by others provided right conditions are supplied.” He goes as far as to say that mere legal guarantees of civil liberties such as “free speech” are inadequate if the experience of “free speech” is “choked by mutual suspicion, by abuse, by fear and hatred.” In response to mere legal guarantees, Dewey’s idea of democracy consists of a balanced mixture of social cooperation, conflicts, and disputes in decision-making processes. Instead of having “one party conquer by forceful suppression of the other,” including “means of ridicule, abuse, intimidation, [or] by overt imprisonment or in concentration camps,” it is possible for decisions to be made by all individuals who are involved or
affected by the decision. The challenge of democracy, in his words, is “forever that of [the] creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute.”

In one of his most radical works, *Democracy and Education* (1916), John Dewey also observes the adverse effects of hierarchical organization, particularly in the context of institutionalized education. He notices in particular how problems in institutionalized education are inextricably tied to the problems in political economy. Externally imposed end goals that tamper with actual processes in education or political economy diminish the value of the whole process. For Dewey, education and work are originally intended to enhance the life experiences of the participants themselves, rather than to serve imposed objectives of authority figures. In the case of education, for example, systems of grades and credentials serve to artificially induce students to study, not with the intention to enhance their learning experiences, but often for the cynical purpose of disciplining them through reward, recognition, punishment, guilt, and shame. Likewise, in a workplace were the process of labor is subordinated to the end goals such as material reward and punishment, the workers themselves are inevitably instrumentalized. Dewey writes that under unfree economic conditions, “work or industry offers little to engage the emotions and the imagination; it is a more or less mechanical series of strains. Only the hold which the completion of the work has upon a person will keep him going. But the end should be intrinsic to the action; it should be its end—a part of its own course.” Dewey believes that, instead of being driven by authority, social reality can instead be motivated by the individuals within it, such that human activity is not serving any alleged end goals but only the “freeing of activities.” The freeing of activities means that individuals can constantly reconstruct their social experiences without obeying authority. In disobeying authority, individuals demonstrate that authorities are contingent social roles that can be undermined in cases of domination.

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75 Ibid, 59.
There is a kind of freedom to be felt when we recognize that authority is contingent rather than necessary. Whether an authority can stand unobstructed depends on whether we grant it its legitimacy by recognizing or obeying it. To assume a priori that an authority is legitimate is to relinquish the opportunity to subject it to critical examination, and to renounce the belief that another person’s authority can potentially be used in dominating ways. The definition of legitimate authority that I have sketched out in Chapter 1 is a demonstration of one of the many possibilities of how the legitimacy of authority can be evaluated. If we recognize that authority is contingent, we can also infer that the authority of any individual or government is contingent insofar that they do not use their authority for domination. As one of the most notable structures of authority, the State is an institution where authority is crystallized, encompassing matters regarding nationalism, labor, gender, race, environment, and legality.

Social geographer Eliseé Reclus describes state authority as a “sacrosanct system of domination [encompassing] a long succession of superimposed classes,” where “the highest have the right to command and the lowest have the duty to obey.” Reclus’ description of state authority suggests that the State is a system of domination because state authority inherently relies upon hierarchical structures of command and obedience. However, it is also an undeniable fact that state authority can sometimes be legitimate, especially in instances when state authority is used to improve the general welfare of people. But what does the definite description of “the State” actually indicate? In his clarifications of what state authority means, Errico Malatesta defines “the State” as a

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76 Elisée Reclus, Anarchy, Geography, Modernity, edited and translated by John Clark and Camille Martin (PM Press, 2013), 123.
impersonal expression, abstracted from the state of things, of which government is the personification.77

What Malatesta interprets as “State” does not designate authority itself, but the usurpation or delegation of power to systems of authority, which then has the capacity to rule over and regulate social reality. Hereafter, I will use the term “state authority” interchangeably with other terms such as “the state,” “state power,” “centralized authority,” “centralized power,” “government,” and “government authority.” I will use these terms to indicate systems of authority that are powerful enough to affect all four spheres of social reality. Such a broad definition would mean that institutions such as corporations and schools could be considered as constituents of the State. My central claim is that constituents of the State can be engines used to perpetuate domination. These constituents, however, can be dismantled or reconstructed through self-organized means as a way to minimize domination. Corporations are, for example, institutions and constituents of the State that normalize economic domination and the concentration of wealth. However, the State and its constituents are contingent authorities that can always be dismantled or reconstructed to become social realities that are non-hierarchical and based on practices of self-determination.

Within the anti-authoritarian tradition, anarchist philosophers have generally been critical of the degree to which domination always persists under the State. They advocate not only that the State is not necessarily conducive to harmonious social life, but also that it represents a threat to the creation of harmonious social conditions. In imagining more egalitarian social realities, social anarchists propose the idea that a stateless society under which social harmony is attained without obedience to authority is possible and desirable.78 From here onwards, I will also use the word “anarchy” to denote a generally anti-authoritarian philosophical outlook that seeks to undermine illegitimate state authority, where the

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prefix of “an-” in “anarchy” is used to signify the negation of political authority under ideal democratic conditions, namely a condition that allows directly democratic decision-making. The negation of political authority does not mean that society immediately collapses into chaos and disorder, but that opportunity is presented for domination and hierarchies to be reconstructed on a more egalitarian, non-hierarchical, and non-dominating basis.

In a classical entry for the *Encyclopædia Britannica* in 1910, Pyotr Kropotkin describes “anarchism” as life under which social harmony takes precedence over the rational authority of government and law. Under such a condition, Kropotkin suggests, society is oriented around free agreements and can constantly adjust and readjust in maintaining social harmony. In his other work, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902), Kropotkin sought to repudiate the social Darwinist view that ideologically supports domination. Instead of attributing social growth to the rise of competition and hierarchies, Kropotkin suggested that the capacity to cooperate is a crucial factor in surviving and in living harmoniously, such that individuals “when least interfered with by coercive authority tend most to practice solidarity and mutual aid.” The theory of mutual aid was not an attempt to refute Darwin’s theory of evolution *per se*, but an elaboration of an ideologically neglected factor—in addition to the theory of “natural selection” and self-preservation—that has contributed to the development and evolution of life on Earth. In an anarchistic society, Kropotkin envisions that governments based on privileged rule and exploitative domination would be rendered futile vocations, as individuals come to organize themselves in an orderly fashion based on practices of solidarity and mutual aid. Individuals would come to renounce the spirit of domination, and to organize for purposes of solidarity and mutual aid rather than to strive to constantly amass power and influence. Anarchism therefore represents an effort to expand notions of legitimate authority beyond social reality to the realm of political organization. However, anarchist philosophy is

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79 Ibid.
often met with a barrage of objections and counterarguments, among them are charges of impracticality, utopianism, and political fanaticism.

One of the most prominent objections against anarchist theory is its impracticality, the argument that anarchism is simply unachievable considering the reality of the size of the human population and the necessity for law and order. It is argued that, without an expedient and efficient centralized authority, large-scale societies would not be sustainable. After all, without a government, who would be responsible for distributing resources, providing public services, constructing and repairing roads, regulating the economy and environment? In short, it is argued that some level of state authority must be tolerated due to the reality of our society, and that anarchism presents an unrealistic alternative to the existing state of affairs. Following this line of argument, one can claim that the idea of stateless society is merely a utopian one. Errico Malatesta wrestled with these objections to anarchism and proposed the idea that “organs and functions are inseparable terms.” He claims that the government and its role are inextricably tied to the social conditions that the government is founded upon, and that centralized state authorities are legitimized insofar that we agree with the social conditions that they are founded upon. To demonstrate this simple idea, Malatesta provides two examples—an army and a police force. He claims that an army, when put in a country where there is no good reason to engage in a foreign war, will attempt to provoke such war or risk being disbanded. Likewise, in a place where no criminals are to be found, crimes would have to be provoked or invented in order for a police force or legislative body to exist. Malatesta’s examples illustrate a basic observation that those who hold power always have a vested interest in maintaining their authority. The army and police force are two examples that demonstrate how organs and functions are inseparable. By the same logic, state authorities also have a vested interest in perpetuating their own existence, because our belief in their legitimacy lies in the conditions that they are founded upon.

Similar to Kropotkin, Malatesta is also critical of any systems of authority that perpetuate privileged rule and domination. He claims that in any government where a privileged class of individuals is put in positions of authority, they would have monopolistic control over “social capital, all public services, from the production and distribution of provisions to the manufacture of matches, from the control of the university to the music hall.” Such a privileged class would perpetuate its authority and influence by preserving patterns of privilege—“if they could not retain the power in their own hands, they would at least secure to themselves privileged positions for the time when they would be out of office. They would use all the means they have in their power to get their own friends elected as their successors, who would in their turn be supported and protected by their predecessors.” In any bureaucratic government based on the rule of the few, state authority is designed to be self-perpetuating and exclusive without any serious participation from the general public. Periodic electoral systems can be instituted in order to create a façade of legitimacy for the authorities elected. Upon election, these authorities have little to no interest to reflect the interests of the public at large. Even if they do, the social reality in place would severely restrict their actions, such that they would have to make maneuvers and make compromises at best. In response to government run by privileged individuals, Malatesta proposes that state authority must be abolished and replaced by individual self-organization. He claims that, “to abolish authority, means to abolish the monopoly of force and of influence. It means to abolish that state of things by which social force, \textit{i.e.}, the collective force of all in a society, is made the instrument of the thought, will and interests of a small number of individuals.” Abolishing state authority, as Malatesta describes, does not entail the destruction of all social forces. It is instead the creative destruction of social forces that is used to render others subservient to itself, and through such destruction, to reconstruct social reality based on practices of solidarity and mutual aid. Malatesta’s anarchism strives to represent a

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82 Ibid, 131.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid, 144.
highly organized society and a constant expression of “the highest degree of liberty and order to which humanity can aspire.” For Malatesta, to abolish state authority means to abolish the monopoly of force and influence through collective action, so that individuals would no longer be “made the instrument of the thought, will and interests of a small number of individuals.” Anarchism therefore represents both the negative destruction of monopolies of force and influence, and positive forms of transformations to anarchistic practices such as self-organization and mutual aid.

A second objection can be made to anarchist philosophy. One can argue that it would be, in some situations, irresponsible to undermine state authority when state authority is used for legitimate means. Examples of legitimate state authority could be environmental regulations or decisions to develop non-renewable energy sources. Such an objection is valid, but it is reasonable to assume that a genuine anarchist is in agreement that legitimate state authority should not be undermined without legitimate reasons. It is evident that state authority is oftentimes used for both dominating and non-dominating means in reality, such that it is difficult to excuse their authority in some area when they have already functioned to dominate in other areas. Anarchist philosophy in general is not focused on abolishing authority itself, but the of creation non-dominating forms of authority. It is therefore unreasonable to portray anarchism as solely oriented around the fixed goal of abolishing all authority, for it would be a reification of a complex political philosophy to a single term. In light of the ideas proposed by Kropotkin and Malatesta, anarchism constitutes concrete practices in social reality that affirm the values of mutual aid and solidarity, to the extent that a monopoly on power and influence is always negated by directly democratic ways of organizing social life. Anarchism is therefore a philosophy of life, or a philosophy of action, rather than a body of doctrine with definite principles, as Rudolf Rocker puts it.

Anarchism is no patent solution for all human problems, no Utopia of perfect social order, as it has so often been called, since on principle it rejects all absolute schemes and concepts. It does not

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believe in any absolute truth, or in definite final goals for human development, but in an
unlimited perfectibility of social arrangements and human living conditions, which are always
straining after higher forms of expression, and to which for this reason one can assign no definite
terminus not set any fixed goals. The worst crime of every type of state is just that it always tries
to force the rich diversity of social life into definite forms and adjust it to one particular form,
which allows for no wider outlook and regards the previously exciting status as finished. The
stronger its supporters feel themselves, the more completely they succeed in bringing every field
of social life into their service, the more crippling is their influence on the operation of all creative
cultural forces, the more unwholesomely does it affect the intellectual and social development of
any particular epoch.86

In this chapter, I have explored Plumwood’s non-dualist framework and suggested non-dominating
alternatives to practices of domination. I also discussed the extent to which authority is contingent, with
specific considerations of the authority of the State. Grounded upon the definitions of authority and
domination I provided in Chapter 1, I offered anti-authoritarian critiques of state authority in this
chapter. I found that state authority is prone to routinize domination in its policy and practices, and that
they are fundamentally self-perpetuating and self-legitimizing enterprises if not kept in check by an
informed public. In reconstructing social reality without relying on new forms of authority, practices such
as self-organization, solidarity, and mutual aid are discussed with reference to thinkers such as
Kropotkin, Malatesta, Gandhi, and Dewey. Specifically, Gandhi and Dewey’s conceptions of labor
allowed me to explore non-dominating alternatives to contemporary wage labor. Furthermore
Kropotkin’s discussion of solidarity and mutual aid provides contrasting counter-ideologies to
contemporary notions of market competition, individualist meritocracy, and the survival-of-the-fittest. To
refute potential objections to the impracticality of anarchism, I looked at Malatesta’s conception of state
authority and considered his response to defenses of the State. In the upcoming chapter (Chapter 3), I will
apply the ideas that I have discussed thus far to a case study of the Umbrella Movement (2014) in Hong
Kong. Such a case study allows me to further clarify some of the ideas that I propose in Chapters 1 and 2,

and to substantiate these ideas with the empirical observation and ethnographic interviews that I have conducted.
Chapter 3

Social Movements:
A Case Study of the Umbrella Movement (2014)

“Impossibility never prevented anything from happening.”
— Errico Malatesta

The question of authority—as we have discussed in Chapter 1—is about the legitimacy of authority and whether or not authority constitutes domination. To address domination, I proposed in Chapter 2 that social reality, including the social imaginary, ideology, ethos, and institutions, can be reconstructed based on practices of mutual aid and solidarity, which is carried out best through self-determination aimed at achieving the common good. In this chapter (Chapter 3), I will shift my focus to an empirical study of a social movement in order to elucidate how the practices and methods discussed in Chapter 2 can be practically implemented. My intention here is not make a generalizing statement about universal qualities of social movements, but to provide some examples in one social movement where new approaches to authority are enacted in practice. Doing so will also allow me to discuss alternative social realities that social movements can potentially offer. Specifically, I will use the Umbrella Movement (2014) in Hong Kong as a central case study to explore how social movements can potentially demonstrate how non-state actors can create alternatives to existing forms of social organizations that are based predominantly on centralized authority (or domination for that matter).

In this chapter, I will also explore the idea of a public “commons” that is created in the Umbrella Movement, drawing from the works of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. My discussion of the “commons” will address how new organizations and institutions are created based on self-organization. Like the Satyagraha movement and “disaster anarchism” that Clark examines in The Impossible Community,
I want to explore another instance of self-organized movement that counteracts domination by creating new social realities. My own case study on the Umbrella Movement will also draw from a series of ethnographic interviews that I conducted. Although my focus in this chapter is predominantly on the positive aspects of the Umbrella Movement, I am aware of the limitations and weaknesses that the movement has as a whole. My intention in doing this case study is therefore not to glorify the achievements of the protests, but rather to highlight how struggles for self-organization can simultaneously generate non-dominating ways of life. I argue that self-organizing in such manners can counteract domination. As movements such as the Umbrella Movement suggest, non-dominating social realities alternative to existing ones are not impossible, but a possibility if individuals can collectively mobilize against existing forms of domination, whether in race, gender, class, or the environment.

I. Umbrella Movement: Origins & Development

The struggle for democratic self-determination in Hong Kong, as a former British colony, is a part of the global revolt against colonialism.\(^\text{87}\) Much of the existing scholarly literature on the history of Hong Kong downplays the presence of British colonial practices, oftentimes glorifying the stability it created in contrast to pre-colonial or post-colonial eras. But this narrative is, to a certain extent, a part of the rhetoric subsumed under the social imaginary and social ideology used to justify colonial rule.\(^\text{88}\) Counter to the hegemonic status of colonial narratives, ideology, ethos, and institutions, anti-colonial and decolonization movements provide some alternative ways of life that reaffirm local self-determination. However, the actual process of decolonization depends on whether the colonized people can mobilize as a force to resist the domination of colonial powers. By doing so, the colonized people are rejecting the colonial ideology, imaginary, ideologies, and institutions that are imposed upon them. This includes a rejection of


notions of superiority and inferiority in the colonial social imaginary, a rejection of ideologies such as the “white man’s burden,” and a rejection of institutions that facilitate the colonizers’ project of empire building. Rather than allowing the colonizing masters to harness the colonized people as an expendable instrument, and to plunder and dominate the rest of the globe, the colonized people can always rise from the “depths of slavery” and “set themselves up as judges” in taking matters in their own hands.89

Like the Satyagraha movement that Clark discusses, Hong Kong is an instance of the struggle for independence and self-determination against imperial domination by the British Empire. The prospect of democracy in Hong Kong has always been met with skeptical eyes, especially under the rule of the British crown in colonial times, or even under the ruling authority of the Beijing politburo after 1997. As a former British colony and a current “Special Administrative Region” under the ruling Chinese Communist Party, Hong Kong is situated in an inconvenient geopolitical context that provides a unique case study of democratic self-determination. This is especially true if the colonial past of Hong Kong is taken into account. As Sonny Lo observes in *Hong Kong’s Indigenous Democracy* (2016), the people of Hong Kong have never enjoyed the freedom to elect a majoritarian Chief Executive under the framework of genuine representative democracy, despite being granted relative freedoms to a constitutional rule of law, “checks and balances,” freedoms of speech, press, association, religion, and the freedom to protest.90 Lo’s account of Hong Kong’s struggle for genuine representative democracy extends to a discussion of perspectives on the Occupy Central and Umbrella Movement in 2014. In order to understand the origins of the 2014 protests in Hong Kong, I will explore here the colonial rule of the British Empire over Hong Kong and to what extent it is still under the imperial domination of the ruling party in China.

Hong Kong has long been regarded as a post-colonial city after Britain “returned” Hong Kong to China as a sort of territorial commodity. Historically, the city was colonized as a result of the two Opium Wars that occurred during the mid-19th century, which ceded Hong Kong to Britain as a territorial prize,

90 Lo, *Hong Kong’s Indigenous Democracy*, 17.
along with the forceful imposition of trade ports in China. The Opium Wars are themselves instances of colonial-imperialism that relied on ideologies such as the “white man’s burden,” along with the creation of a mercantile world trade system that socially and economically subordinated “peripheral” states to the central state powers such as Britain, Spain, and France. British views of China as the “sick man of Asia” (“东亚病夫”) is symbolic of the colonial mentality that racially inferiorized the colonized people in order to justify the colonized people’s subordinate status. This allowed the colonizers to divide the world into two racially homogenized compartments—a hierarchical dualism between the colonizing masters, and the inferiorized colonized people. In such a system, “the settler owes the fact of his [the colonized people’s] very existence, that is to say, his property, to the colonial system.”91 The colonial ideology and imaginary that functioned to legitimize imperial domination in Hong Kong is an instance of Plumwood’s logic of domination, where two groups are homogenized and ranked in racialized terms. According to this logic, those who are in Hong Kong are treated as inferiors subject to the needs and demands of the colonizers. In the context of Hong Kong, this means that the needs and desires of ordinary people in Hong Kong were rendered secondary to the colonizing masters. One example of the prevailing social imaginary and ideology employed by British colonizers was that “the Opium War and the ‘imperialism of free trade’ would liberate China.”92

Compared to the other more violent colonial experiences elsewhere, such as in the American continents, Hong Kong’s colonial experience was much less ridden by forms of violence that are immediately deplorable, because British rule in Hong Kong mostly relied on forms of structural violence rather than more direct acts of violence. The partial reason for this is because Hong Kong is a relatively small city where Britain could easily impose its economic and political imperatives without worrying too much about local resistance. The fact that Hong Kong is such a small region (compared to the British Empire) means that the colonial forces will most likely suppress any serious local attempts to disobey the

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91 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Black Cat, 1968), 36.
92 Carroll, *Edge of Empire*, 29.
colonizers. Such conditions were ripe for the colonizers to freely enforce trade networks that profited the British Empire, which “opened up” Hong Kong and parts of China as a trade port for a more streamlined trading route for the colonizers. Hong Kong’s role was to shine brightly as the “pearl of the East” and the “Emporium of the Eastern World.” The forceful imposition of trade networks during this colonial era was a part of the globalization of capital, which began in form of mercantile trade. Emerging monetarily victorious out of this structure of domination is not only a class of British mercantilists, but also a nascent class of elites within Hong Kong, both of whom contributed to the “imperialism of free trade.”

After Hong Kong “returned” to China on July 1, 1997, the people have increasingly been demanding the institution of direct elections of both the Chief Executive and the entire Legislative Council (“LegCo”). The “one country, two system” (一國兩制) model is at the heart of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, which legally mandates that Hong Kong is to be granted a “high degree of autonomy” despite being a part of the People’s Republic of China. Calls for direct elections are motivated mainly by the impulse to prevent Hong Kong from becoming a mere “political appendage of the central government in Beijing.” Increasingly, however, the political reality seems to confirm that the latter direction is where Hong Kong is headed towards in the coming decades. In an interview I conducted with Mr. Chan, a local artist in Hong Kong, we discussed the topic of self-determination, and to what extent Hong Kong has always been a colony even after the “Handover” from Britain to China in 1997. Mr. Chan claims that the Handover constitutes domination, because Hong Kong was never involved in any of the decision-making processes involving its future. Starting from British colonization, the Sino-British Joint Declaration, Basic Law, then the “return” of Hong Kong to China, the Hong Kong people were never allowed to participate in any of these processes that directly affected them. Instead, these decisions

95 Carroll, Edge of Empire, 29.
96 Lo, Hong Kong’s Indigenous Democracy, 18.
were imposed on Hong Kong by distant state authorities in Beijing and London. The ability of the Hong Kong people to self-determine their future has always been subordinated to the imperial demands of Britain or China, where local autonomy is subordinated to the interests dictated by state authorities that have little to nothing to do with the people they rule over. The imperial domination of the state of China is reminiscent of the Qin Empire (approx. 221 to 206 BCE), when China was first “unified” under a single ruling authority with the help of draconian legalist institutions. Mr. Chan claims that the state authority in Beijing is different to that of the Qin Empire only because there is a single-party authority (Communist Party of China) rather than a single individual (Emperor Qin).

Imperial domination over Hong Kong by Britain and China has always been coupled with economic domination. For instance, one of the many colonial narratives that emerged to support British authority over Hong Kong was that the “mighty spirit of free market” would “[fuse] the interest of European and Chinese merchants into [an] indissoluble unity.” Colonial Hong Kong would then be a culmination of “the inchoative union of Europe and China, by the subordination of the latter to the former, and this by means of free trade coupled with enlightened and humane local government.” The origin of Hong Kong’s movement for self-determination can be traced back to this opening for “the onslaught of finance and real estate capital at the expense of low income groups, local resources, culture and history, [that thus triggered] discontent and anger brewed by social injustice and inequality.” The gradual economic liberalization of East Asia is a part of the larger trend of neoliberal globalization, which, especially for wage laborers in Hong Kong, has meant, “prolonged working hours and unbearable or inhuman working conditions.” As such, growing social inequality is another factor that contributes to efforts to achieve more self-determination in Hong Kong. Doing so will address not only the intractable

97 Chan, “Interview with Local Artist on the Umbrella Movement,” interview by author, January 17, 2018.
98 Ibid.
99 Carroll, Edge of Empire, 58.
100 Hui and Lau, “‘Living in truth’ versus realpolitik,” 350.
101 Ibid, 351.
alliance between the domestic government and the ruling party in Beijing, but also provide a greater
degree of autonomy for the domestic population. The Chief Executive of Hong Kong has never been
elected through indirect representative institutions, let alone through directly democratic means, because
the Chief Executive has always been elected through the delegation of voting power to the political organ
known as “Functional Constituencies,” which predominantly consists of the business and corporate
elites. The representative government that responds to the interest of the business and politically
powerful is an ethos and institutional framework that Hong Kong inherited from imperial Britain, which
now answers to the demands of the ruling party in Beijing.

The White Paper published by the Chinese central government in 2014 is a catalytic turning point
in the struggle for democracy in Hong Kong. In the White Paper, the central government reiterated its
stance that judges who are part of the administration have to be sufficiently “patriotic,” which meant
candidates have to be vetted according to the ruling party’s standard of patriotism. Furthermore, the
White Paper expressed the extent to which democratic participation and local self-determination is
permissible by the central authorities, namely that the existing status quo is the limit of freedom and
dissent that the politburo is willing to tolerate. Criticisms of the White Paper in domestic Hong Kong
reoriented public focus to the issue of self-determination, and contributed to the resurrection of the
Occupy Central movement that has been dormant since early 2014. Initial efforts to occupy the Central
district of Hong Kong later developed into the Umbrella Movement, named after the symbolic resistance
by protestors against police repression with umbrellas. As a whole, the Umbrella Movement strived to be
a horizontal and directly democratic movement where participants are engaged in inclusive decision-
making processes to determine Hong Kong’s political future. The movement presented a counter-
ideology to imperial domination, along with new forms of imaginary, ethos, and institutions. In doing so,
the protesters in the Umbrella Movement are already—whether knowingly or not—creating spaces of the

102 Ibid, 19.
103 Johannes Chan, “Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement,” The Round Table 103 (2014), 575.
alternatives societies that they have imagined, even though the original intention of the movement was to appeal to power in demanding representative rule through universal suffrage. Although representative government is characterized by the periodic delegation of power to systems of indirect bureaucratic rule, the movement was paradoxically able to create tangible alternatives that lasted while they could.

II. Methods of Resistance

The Umbrella Movement started as a protest that appeals to state authority in demand for universal suffrage. Initial organizers of the Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP) movement explicitly appealed to the rule of law and “international standards” in universal suffrage as reasons for their demonstration. The three founders of the OCLP movement were dubbed the “Occupy Central Troika,” or “佔中三子” in Cantonese, including Rev. Chu Yiu-ming (human rights activist), Mr. Benny Tai (law professor at University of Hong Kong), and Dr. Chan Kin-man (sociology professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong). These three individuals cited legal documents such as the Sino-British Joint Declaration (1984) and Article 45 of the Basic Law (1997) in their efforts to appeal to the central authorities for genuine representative elections. The movement that they initiated culminated in an electronic public referendum of three proposals for electoral systems alternative to the existing one, in which 800,000 people participated. The unexpectedly large turnout for this referendum greatly accelerated the pace of the Occupy Central movement, and created conditions for a more radical and predominantly student-led movement that continued the spirit of the original Occupy Central movement. The movement that came after Occupy Central is the Umbrella Movement, and despite the lack of the leadership and organization that the Umbrella Movement had, it relied more on direct action rather than simply protests in contrast to its predecessor.

104 Ibid.
105 Benny Tai Yui-ting, “Interview with Occupy Central Founder.”
The Umbrella Movement is organized through horizontal processes that enabled decisions to be made without necessarily having a single authority or leadership within the movement. Theoretically, each individual is allowed to participate without having imposed on them decisions that they did not consent to or take part in. The movement as a whole experimented with democracy through decision-making processes that did not necessitate any authority or leadership. A charitable description of the organization within the Umbrella Movement is its “refusal of singular demands, ideologies, or programmes for social change (linked to the movements terms ‘diversity’ and ‘horizontality’),” because everyone is allowed to be involved to discuss and decide on issues and to take matters in their own hands to lead the lives that they want. Like many other social movements for social and environmental justice, the Umbrella Movement exhibits different tactics and methods that are used to instigate emancipatory social change. The tactics and methods used can be conceptually organized into three broad and fluid categories, including: 1) protest, 2) civil disobedience, and 3) direct action. In the first category, protest includes actions used to pressure those in authority, which can vary in terms of the degree of militancy employed. Examples of protest include demonstrations, strikes, marches, and riots. Protest can be more effective in some circumstance as opposed to other strategies used, and is usually employed in situations of urgency that demands those in authority, especially authorities within institutions of power, to act differently. Other times they are employed because of the practical outcomes that they bring in changing the general consciousness with society, concerning a change in ideology and imaginary.

In the second category, civil disobedience can be a form of protest when individuals organize to purposefully disobey illegitimate authority or unjust laws. The refusal to pay taxes to a government in protest of certain policies of domination, or the boycott of corporations that funds the construction of pipelines (i.e., environmental domination), and the occupation of the financial district of a city in protest

of wealth inequality and predatory banking, are all examples of protests that can turn into civil disobedience. In some cases, civil disobedience can turn into direct action. In the third and final category, direct actions are actions performed to defy power as if existing structures of power did not exist. In occupational protests, for example, people often direct resources autonomously and deliberately create horizontal decision-making processes in order to act as if power structures did not exist. Of course, this may not always end up as perfectly successful. One of the key distinctions between protest and direct action is that protest does not necessarily imply the questioning of the legal order itself, whereas forms of direct action involve the reconstruction of alternate forms of social realities that directly challenge the legitimacy of existing forms of authority and domination.

Direct action is an effective way to reconstruct social reality, because it neither directly appeals to authority nor settles for the concessions that authorities make in order to appease acts of protestation or civil disobedience. In other words, direct action is the “defiant insistence on acting as if one is already free.” To march on a financial district can be described as a form of protest, to occupy the financial district can be said as a form of civil disobedience, and to set up encampments and institute new forms of decision-making processes within the occupied territories is a form of direct action. It is direct, not only because it denies the authority currently in place and recreates alternative forms of social organization, but because those who are involved in the direct acts are voluntarily involved in creating a more humane, decent, inclusive, and just society. Direct action and direct democracy can be thought of as two terms referring to a similar concept, namely the idea that methods of social change require the self-determination of any individuals who are involved in it.

The Occupy Central was radicalized when it was subsumed under the Umbrella Movement, most notably when student protesters rushed into the Civic Square (government headquarters in Hong Kong) and occupied the area. The more moderate wing of the pro-democratic camp, in addition to the

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108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
pro-Beijing camp, where among those who condemned the confrontational tactics used by the students. Despite the explicitly stated principle of “non-violent civil disobedience”\textsuperscript{110} that the Umbrella Movement was based on, moderate or pro-establishment commentators hastened to label the student protestors as engaging in acts of “violence,” depicting them as lawbreakers and uncivil hooligans who are disrupting public order. The sensationalized media framing that focused on the confrontational aspects of the Umbrella Movement reinforced the negative portrayal of the student protests, and decreased support for the Umbrella Movement. But the main point of the occupation was that it constituted a collective effort in direct action, where public spaces were occupied and transformed into a commons—a place where the normative dictates of state authority were nullified, replaced with prefigurative social institutions that are organized by the individuals themselves. In an interview I had with a restaurant cooperative worker who participated in the Umbrella Movement, I was informed of the self-organized nature of the movement, and how new institutions are constructed within the occupied commons of the movement. Specifically, these new forms of institutions are characterized by non-hierarchical organization, displacing traditional bureaucratic and top-down ways of organizing social life. Institutions such as medical care stations, common-pool resource stations, and a commons called the “Umbrella Square” were created.\textsuperscript{111}

To reconstruct social reality—including imaginary, ideology, ethos, and institutions—without any hierarchical order is a challenging endeavor, but not impossible, if we take responsibility through self-determination directed at the common good. The challenges for social movements to be self-directing, directly democratic, and pluralistic, comes into play because it can contribute to the successes of how movements develop without falling into the trap of creating new forms of hierarchies and domination. Direct action is particularly effective in such a process, because, as opposed to protest or civil disobedience, direct action does not appeal to structures of authority that already exist in social reality. Instead, direct action seeks to provide alternate social realities. If done correctly, direct action can

\textsuperscript{110} Benny Tai Yui-ting, “Interview with Occupy Central Founder.”

\textsuperscript{111} “Interview with Restaurant Cooperative Worker.”
reconstruct new forms of social realities in limited spaces within social movements. Those within these social movements are given the implicit responsibility to ensure that direct acts are consistent with mutual aid and solidarity, such as in instances where they deliberate over what course of action to pursue in order to address the needs of everyone in the movement and the common good. Through methods of occupation, voluntary association, and deliberation, direct action can take on a directly democratic character, and allow spaces to be created that are counter-hegemonic (in the sense that Plumwood uses it) and for the purposes of the common (with reference to Hardt and Negri’s notion of non-property).

Picture 1: Umbrella Movement In Action. A panoramic view of the encampments of the Umbrella Movement from the pedestrian sidewalk, which permitted pedestrian flow but hindered the flow of traffic because of the closed roads and highways. Looking at the encampments from the pedestrian perspective was a way of showing solidaristic support by those who did not stay overnight on the streets, especially considering that most of the people who stayed were high school or college students that could withstand the potential physical prostration that the protest demanded from them.\(^\text{112}\)

\(^{112}\) Photo taken by Lampson Lam and Sophia Tso during the Umbrella Movement in October 2014.
III. Occupied Commons As Non-Property

The space that the Umbrella Movement was able to occupy “does not only imply taking back public spaces, but also re-gaining control over autonomy and freedom, reclaiming the right to non-conformity and to one’s dignity, as well as the mastery over one’s own fate.”\(^{113}\) The Umbrella Movement is a protest against a recurring theme of the problems of state authority, where “those who are in power have no popular mandate, and those who have a popular mandate have no power.”\(^{114}\) Self-organized institutions and ethe that emerged out of the Umbrella Movement not only protests domination by state authorities, but actively created alternative social realities that demonstrate the contingency of state authority. In my interview with the local artist Mr. Chan, for example, he discussed how social issues relating to the public were actually discussed within the occupied zones, whereas these issues would have been otherwise been decided by the government or the law, without public participation and consent.\(^{115}\) Examples of self-organized institutions such as medical care stations and common-pool resource stations demonstrate how new institutions can be formed in contrast to existing ones, in realizing some of Plumwood’s recommended practices such as *redistribution* and *non-ranking*. The occupied areas represent a public commons that is neither owned by the state nor by private corporations. It therefore represents a negation of the notion of property, given that there is no element of monopolization, either by the state or by individual power.

Against state-owned enterprises (sometimes “public property”) and privately owned properties, Hardt and Negri define a socially accessible way of conceiving and sustaining social life through a “commons.” The social production of material and immaterial goods such as commodities and ideas is placed in decision-making processes and usages by the individuals themselves within a commons, without being monopolized either by public or private forms of tyranny, whether in form of the state or

\(^{113}\) Hui and Lau, “‘Living in truth’ versus *realpolitik*,” 358.

\(^{114}\) Chan, “Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement,” 572.

\(^{115}\) Chan, “Interview with Local Artist on the Umbrella Movement.”
corporations. In their work *Assembly* (2017), Hardt and Negri point towards the democratic experiments of encampment and occupation, “from Tahrir (Cairo) to Taksim (Istanbul), from Puerto del Sol (Madrid) to Zuccotti Park (New York), and from Ogawa Plaza (Oakland) to Cinelândia (Rio de Janeiro) when activists temporarily *made urban space common*.” These spaces that are originally considered to be private or public are transformed into areas that demonstrate the “open access and experimental mechanisms of democratic management.” They argue that forms of civil disobedience and direct action in social movements are at their best when structures of democratic decision-making are focused on the long-term transformation of social reality, and where leadership is limited only to specific circumstances, in order to prevent the rise of relations of hierarchy and domination within the movements themselves. These social movements, which include methods of protest, civil disobedience, and direct action, are “symptoms of a deeper social reality,” which can embody our potential ability to practice solidarity and mutual aid.

Hardt and Negri substantiate their idea of a “commons” and suggest that the current property system can be reconstructed as forms of “nonproperty.” Their argument is partially a refutation of the ideology that private property is intrinsic to and necessary for social life, motivated by the desire to dismantle the illegitimate authority that arises when non-properties (which include possessions) are socialized as exclusive properties. To provide evidence, Hardt and Negri gave a list of five examples of non-property: 1) the earth and its ecosystems, 2) immaterial symbols, ideas, images, etc., 3) material commodities, 4) metropolitan and rural social territories, and 5) social institutions and services such as health, education, and housing. Radical social movements that reject forms of domination such as property relations can protest or occupy certain spaces to create a commons, or to directly disrupt the

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117 Ibid, 19.
118 Ibid, 69.
119 Ibid, 97.
120 Ibid, 98.
chain of command or production process. In the case of private properties, one of the effective ways to disrupt the productive processes based on private profits is when workers go on strike. Hardt and Negri’s work suggests that labour union activities such as strikes can act in mutually reinforcing ways with social movements outside of labour organizations to undermine domination in all forms, such as economic, gender, sexual, military, and so on.

Within the Umbrella Movement, a variety of institutions have been organized around Hardt and Negri’s understanding of non-property. The medical care stations within the occupied areas, for example, are organized not for the extrinsic purposes of profitmaking or responding to the demands of a bureaucratic government, but primarily for the purpose of providing medical care to those who are in need. Individuals who work in the medical care stations voluntarily chose to do so, and are exercising their authority based on expertise with the intention to care for others. Furthermore, in contrast to existing private forms of healthcare in Hong Kong, the medical care stations within the Umbrella Movement did not restrict access to privilege or reinforce social inequality using access to healthcare. The medical care station therefore represents a public commons that is not “owned” by any given particular individual, private group, or the state, but by those who voluntarily work there and those who are in need of medical attention. More importantly, the medical care station is not subordinated to additional goals such as the profit motive or the demands of state authority.

IV. Critique of Representation & the Legitimacy of Leadership in Movements

One of the crises in contemporary representative governments is the degree of democratic participation that is actually occurring within systems of “representative democracy.” As Hardt and Negri suggest, the degree of democratic participation in representative political systems has always been inadequate, because, from the point of view of the majority of representative bureaucrats, it is always “necessary to come up with something to dress up its grip on the common, and to convince us that it
represents us.” Acts of appropriation by private corporations or the state are thus euphemized as economic management and political representation. In my interview with a restaurant cooperative worker who participated in the Umbrella Movement, my informant suggests that contemporary “one-person-one-vote” electoral systems represent merely a facet of neoliberal capitalist domination, because the parameters to determine who gets elected always functions to safeguard the interests of the business and political elites. He then lists three fatal limitations that representative systems have, especially considering that one of the stated goals of the Umbrella Movement is the achievement of representation through universal suffrage. Firstly, that mere electoral politics would not solve the power of transnational capital and issues of state government. Secondly, that social grievance—such as the housing crisis and wealth inequality—would still persist within the capitalistic framework of electoral politics. Thirdly, that Hong Kong does not have a strong culture of democratic participation because of historical reasons; therefore representation through universal suffrage should not be the emphasis and ultimate goal of the movement. A dual problem that is also present here is that universal suffrage does not necessarily lead to political representation, and that political representation does not necessitate genuine democracy. The doctrine of representative democracy can be repudiated in practice, however, if social movements simply replace existing hierarchies with new forms of non-hierarchical relationship. This is especially true if we consider how the Umbrella Movement’s fixation on universal suffrage and representation has affected developments in actual democratic institutions. The emphasis given to universal suffrage within the movement perhaps diverted public attention to more critical issues such as social inequality, wealth distribution, environmental injustice, and the legitimacy of state authority, all of which are the roots of the problem of representation.

122 “Interview with Restaurant Cooperative Worker.”
123 Ibid.
If political representation should not be the ultimate end goal of social movements, should representative leadership be outlawed within the social movements themselves? Can there be new forms of legitimate authority emerging out of social movements that do not contribute to the making of domination? In exploring the potential of “leaderless” social movements, Hardt and Negri suggest that there are three main challenges that social movements are always faced with: 1) participants are to be self-directed, disruptive, and contesting actors; 2) that movements as a whole should be directly democratic, without centralized leadership but maintaining the importance of organization and institutions; and that 3) movements should encourage plurality of subjectivity. The discrepancy between the goal of protest and the internal organization of protesting is an interesting place to explore questions of leadership.

Within the Umbrella Movement, leadership has emerged throughout in order to organize the movement in demand for universal suffrage. Benny Tai, one of the co-founders of the Occupy Central movement whom I interviewed, claims that there are three kinds of democratic mechanisms: direct democracy, deliberative democracy, and representative democracy. His experience in organizing the Occupy Central movement relied on all three of these mechanisms. For example, he claims that he acted as a sort of “leader” when he facilitated decision-making processes by helping ordinary citizens to make informed choices by providing useful information and by engaging the public in political discussions. As a highly educated law professor in Hong Kong, he assumed the role of a facilitator and acted as an authority of expertise. His authority is therefore legitimate because his authority is not used for purposes of domination but for the sake of solidarity and mutual aid. In other instances, his role as a facilitator receded when he acted as an individual within the occupational protest, where the function of leadership is rendered futile because of the lack of the need for expertise. The latter role meant that he no longer

124 Hardt and Negri, Assembly, 57.
125 Benny Tai Yui-ting, “Interview with Occupy Central Founder.”
asserted himself as actively as an authority, because he is now one individual protestor among many others.

Tai’s use of legitimate authority is evidence that leadership is sometimes justifiable in certain situations during a social movement. Hardt and Negri’s notion of “tactical leadership” provides a description of legitimate authority in social movements, where “leadership should be limited to short-term action and tied to specific occasions.”

To enjoy certain freedoms or exclusive access to information and resources without sharing the fruits of these privileges is to court ignorance and irresponsibility—whether in social movements or in institutions of political governance. If we take this premise to be true, then questions regarding the leadership and legitimacy of authority would turn into questions regarding responsibility. Rather than looking at leadership as forms of authority, we can instead look at leadership as a kind of responsibility. However, this way of looking at leadership should not detract us from being vigilant about the potential pitfalls of leadership, such as when leadership devolves into a herding effect when leaders are blindly being followed.

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126 Hardt and Negri, Assembly, 19.
Conclusion

Social movements represent windows into alternate social realities. In anti-authoritarian social movements, non-dominating forms of authority are created within self-directed organizations. These self-directed organizations can in turn alleviate existing forms of domination in matters of race, gender, class, and the environment. My case study of the Umbrella Movement provides an empirical basis for these topics to be considered, and as an instance of anti-authoritarian practices being implemented. The case study is based on a critique of domination, with an understanding that domination is illegitimate authority that is used to acquire and maintain power and influence rather than to enhance the experiences of others. Drawing from the critiques of domination by Plumwood and Clark, I examine both the dualistic nature of domination and domination in the four spheres of social reality. These critiques of domination suggest that non-dualist and non-hierarchical social realities are desirable alternatives to existing ones, and that authority itself can be recognized as a contingent social role that can be challenged in addressing domination.

Challenging authority is not only important in social movements, but also when examining social life. The ubiquity of authority in social life means that better understanding authority is also conducive to philosophical pursuits of happiness, self-realization, and human and ecological flourishing. Better understanding authority and domination can allow us to be aware of the potential benefits and dangers of authority in social life. Epistemologically, it can also keep our own personal authority in check when we assert our beliefs or perform certain actions. Our beliefs and actions can always potentially affect others. In exercising our personal authority, we are thus responsible for whether our authority is used legitimately or not. An awareness of our own personal authority would make us conscientious actors in the social world, such that we do not use our authority to dominate others, but to contribute to others’
experiences in solidaristic ways. Personal authority, then, boils down to the responsibility that we have in looking out for one another and in living harmoniously together.

Beyond attending to our own personal authority, we are also in a way responsible to constantly reconstruct social reality on an egalitarian basis. The process of reconstruction means that individuals are self-organizing to create non-dominating social realities for themselves and each other, replacing forms of authority that are used for domination. Reconstructing non-dominating ways of life means that both personal and structural forms of domination are diagnosed and rooted out in social reality. In the anti-authoritarian works of Kropotkin, Malatesta, and Dewey, these form of domination are examined through an understanding of the State and its associated institutions. Malatesta’s understanding of the State as a monopoly of force and influence is important in this regard, because it relates to large structures of domination. Kropotkin and Dewey provide alternatives to structures of state authority by claiming that mutual aid and self-management are collective practices that can reconstruct social reality from the bottom-up, without subordinating individual social lives to the dictates of external authorities. The political philosophy of the impossible merely indicates that individual social beings are not interfered with by political rule, such that there is an absence of authority under ideal conditions. It represents moments when authority is put on hold to allow the world to run its own course without arbitrary interference. In the words of the dancing revolutionary Emma Goldman, the political philosophy of the impossible is “the philosophy of the sovereignty of the individual” and the “theory of social harmony.”

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