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Jessica Raw
109003694

Exploring Security and Community:
Inoperativity, Immunity and Political Organisation

The word length of this dissertation is ~~14,957~~

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Exploring Security and Community:

Inoperativity, Immunity and Political Organisation

Abstract

This thesis explores those logics that underpin and are legitimated by traditional conceptions of security which remain entrenched within critical work, particularly those relating to social-contractarian, liberal imaginaries of political community. In retaining the idea that politics is an attempt to manage and control the aleatory element of life and death, security scholars and practitioners uphold and perpetuate notions of community as exclusionary operation. In this dissertation, I use the notions of “inoperativity” and “immunity” as forwarded by Jean-Luc Nancy and Roberto Esposito, respectively, in order to challenge dominant liberal conceptions of political community that are at the heart of logics of securitisation. I explore onto-theological underpinnings of both security and community to highlight the typical flawed assumptions of thinking on both. Modern security politics, predicated on the “will to security,” work to reduce community to circumscribed, un-relational *immunity* whilst attempting to put it to use as an operative tool within a technological, managerial political project. This forecloses the possibility to think relationality and *being-with* differently and thus impoverishes our thinking on political organisation. Attempts to locate political community above, below or beyond the sovereign state, and burgeoning critiques of the discourses of sovereignty and anarchy within critical international relations must contend with this. Above all, critical security scholars must address ideological bias towards certain forms of community necessarily contained in logics of security, and the possibilities for political organisation that are foreclosed when politics are presented in this way. A radically new philosophical approach to origins and foundations is necessitated to challenge the totalitarian completion of the political which stems from logics of security and securitisation, and the inability to imagine community outside the sovereign state. I explore Louis Althusser’s aleatory materialist philosophy for its potential to offer a way out of this impasse within international relations thought.

To say that community has not yet been thought is to say that it tries our thinking,
and that it is not an object for it. And perhaps it does not have to become one.

Jean-Luc Nancy¹

¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991) p.26

Introduction

Modern security politics which place primary importance on preserving the life and security of individual subjects and work to reduce politics to practices of management and control, simultaneously defend a specific notion of political community that is antithetical to qualified political life and circumscribes the ways in which we can imagine *being with* one another. The global ubiquity of security, along with the notion that security is a positive political value which is to be achieved by privileging sovereign power, has become so uncontested and unquestioned that we frequently fail to adequately trace the historical specificities of the idea and the foundations and assumptions underpinning it. The logic of securitisation is too often accepted and reified, even, I argue in this thesis, within critical security studies² literature. Despite efforts by some, including CSS scholars, to problematise the term, its pursuit – what I refer to as the “will to security”³ – remains an unquestioned assumption of the universal state system. We thus see what Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe term the retreat (*retrait*) of the political, which is the over-determination of the political by a philosophical concept becoming that which determines the nature of political life and, simultaneously, a withdrawal of such concepts from questioning and contestation. The concept in this case is the idea that activity must be geared towards the pursuit of secure communities, and that this is

² Henceforth referred to as “CSS” which denotes the “small c”, wider range of theories as forwarded in Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) as opposed to the Aberystwyth School of security studies, which I refer to as such.

³ Used to emphasise the philosophical underpinnings of the depoliticised and violent pursuit of security when it is placed above all other values in international politics. The origins of this term are unclear, however, it is one used consistently by Mick Dillon. See, for example, Michael Dillon, *Politics of Security: Towards a political philosophy of continental thought* (London: Routledge, 1996)

able to condition the ways in which we might imagine being with one another politically. It is argued here that as soon as a particular idea of security or organising politically is simply assumed to be the case, we lose the potential to challenge it as merely one philosophical concept among many. This “common sense” exerts a tyranny under which all forms of political life and organisation must correspond to its unquestionable assumptions,⁴ and thus constitutes a totalitarian politics. In accepting international relations as an endless war of securitisation, we are witnessing what Nancy terms ‘the total completion of the political.’⁵

This dissertation reveals our modern understandings of politics to be reliant, foundationally, on the will to security. Among myriad and complex reasons for this, the one that I explore as most fundamental is the unstated reliance on liberal, substantive notions of political community that form seemingly immutable foundations of much of Western political thought, but particularly modern international politics of security. In order to expose these implicit foundations, I juxtapose radically different notions and discussions of “community” against typical Western liberal understandings which permeate security discourse. Specifically, I deploy the ideas of “inoperativity” and “immunity” as forwarded by Jean-Luc Nancy and Roberto Esposito respectively in order to expose foundational myths and deep-rooted assumptions at the heart of the will to security. Above all, I argue that these assumptions are unfounded and, ultimately, unnecessary to the extent that international relations scholars, rather than engaging in attempts to “do” security

⁴ Martin Coward, “Jean-Luc Nancy” in Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams (eds.) *Critical Theorists and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2009) p.253

⁵ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, ed. Simon Sparks (London: Routledge, 1997) p.126

better or to locate ideal forms of political community, must first explore the motivations and assumptions behind these pursuits.

It is undeniable that scholars currently criticise the modern politics of security permeating international relations thought and practice on a number of levels. There is a burgeoning CSS literature which rightly problematises the pursuit of national security objectives over the well-being of the majority of a state's – and indeed the world's – population. Many question the placement of the state as the referent object of the theory and practice of security, recognising as they do that all security technologies revolve around changing understandings of the properties of that referent object.⁶ Some debate, for example, centres on replacing state security with individual security. This methodological individualism can be seen in the work of the Aberystwyth School⁷ and the human security discourse, the latter seeing a large degree of success within policy-making circles and having been adopted by the United Nations.⁸

This thesis addresses the impoverished nature of thinking on political community in this literature, highlighting ways of organising politically that are implicitly accepted as immutable or ideal within logics of securitisation. Despite the partial acceptance within CSS of David Campbell's thesis that security politics constitutes a continuous attempt to establish secure political order internally as much

⁶ Michael Dillon (2006) "Underwriting Security," *Security Dialogue*, 39(2-3) p.314

⁷ See, for example, Ken Booth, *Critical Security Studies and World Politics* (London: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2005), Richard Wyn Jones, *Security, Strategy, and Critical Theory* (London: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1999), Matt McDonald and Alex J. Bellamy (2002) "The Utility of Human Security': Which Humans? What Security? A Reply to Thomas & Tow," in *Security Dialogue*, 33(3) pp.373-377

⁸ See the "United Nations Commission on Human Security" and the "United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security," Available at: www.ochaonline.un.org/Home/tabid2007/Default.aspx, [accessed 13/07/2011]

as externally,⁹ the ideological project of much international relations thinking that posit states as harmonious circles of order within an uncertain, anarchical and dangerous system – as neatly highlighted by Richard Ashley over twenty years ago¹⁰ - continues largely uncontested. To expose this ideology adequately would, I argue, reveal the will to security to be as much, if not more, about securing specific types of political community and rendering them common-sense, unchallengeable solutions, as it is about making life live or of securing individuals. It is the contention of this thesis that though there is very little intrinsically “human” or “necessary” about security that we will inevitably fall back on it however politics might be conceived, it is a necessary component of liberal international politics centred on the sovereign state. Security is the generative and immanent principle of formation of liberal political community. I reveal this to be the case through a refutation liberal ways of seeing and doing, including its ideas on community which are firmly rooted in social contractarian thought. The disruptions explored to modern security politics in adopting unorthodox notions of community cannot be read as simply asserting an alternative form of “true” security, if we understand the term in the forms explored from the outset of chapter one of this dissertation. In exploring more heterodox and critical ways of envisioning political community, using notions derived from the thought of Nancy and Esposito, I further reveal the harmful, ideological and, ultimately, contingent nature of the pursuit of security.

⁹ David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998)

¹⁰ Richard K. Ashley, “Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematic,” *Millennium*, 17(2) pp.227-262

This thesis thus constitutes an attempt to place a critique of modern security politics alongside burgeoning attempts to locate political community above, below or beyond the sovereign state. A number of movements within critical international relations to question and critique orthodox security studies fall back too readily into the logics of sovereign political community and hierarchical organisation that they profess to challenge. Rather than tweaking or attempting to improve security discourse and practice, I argue that the “will to security” is fundamentally about securing particular forms of political community which are increasingly redundant and lacking in foundation. Notwithstanding the risk that a position such as this is, as Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams caution, ‘almost certain to result in continued disciplinary exclusion,’¹¹ it is necessary to engage in a more fundamental critique of modern thinking on security than that which is typically broached by CSS scholars, in order to reveal ideological bias of those studying and practising security towards certain forms of political community, and thus to reveal the contingency of logics of security.

Chapter one engages directly with the notion that ‘[s]ecurity within CSS is open to argumentation and dispute’¹² and reveals the security discourse as complicit in the securing of modern, liberal political community. Debates about security could be seen to centre around, on the one hand, an uncertainty as to whether more broadly defined forms of political community can be realised, and, on the other, the idea that a denial of the possibility seems ‘historically myopic.’¹³ I contend that the latter arguments are not able to answer important questions regarding the nature of international politics,

¹¹ Krause and Williams, *Critical Security Studies*, p.xvi

¹² Wyn Jones, *Security, Strategy and Critical Theory*, p.110

¹³ Krause and Williams, *Critical Security Studies*, p.xvii

much of which are increasingly about the management, operation and control of populations rather than contestation, negotiation or the furthering of emancipatory possibility.

In the second chapter I explore ideas about community forwarded by Nancy and Esposito which set themselves against the hegemony of localised and substantial notions of community as posited by – and recycled since – Plato, Hegel and Kant. Nancy's work is fundamentally different in its anti-teleology and the new understanding of freedom which develops from this. Furthermore community is no longer substantive; it does not have a here or a there, a specific location on a map with its boundaries drawn, and insiders and outsiders neatly positioned. It exists before all contracts and, in fact, exists to resist all such exclusive, self-legitimizing communities.¹⁴ It is, above all, *inoperative*, and unable to constitute, or be put to work. Esposito furthers this understanding by considering modern, liberal political *community* to be, in fact, *immunity*. Through the institution of the social contract, we have successfully created the myth that we have interiorised exteriority when, in fact, we have simply suppressed it, along with relations of being-in-common, thus immunising ourselves against community.¹⁵ This chapter does not constitute a purely exegetical task; I develop, mould and add to these ideas in order to highlight the instances of immunity and operativity that I see permeating modern discourses and politics of security. The will to security reduces community to immunity, and renders this an operative tool in a technological, managerial political project which precludes

¹⁴ Graham Ward, *Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000) p.106

¹⁵ Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.15

the possibility of thinking relations of being-with differently. Herein lies the injury done to international politics by thinking within logics of security.

Chapter three confronts directly the claim that it is the job of international relations theories to secure political community against danger, threat and insecurity (however these might be variously interpreted and whatever they might be deemed to be). I explore the contention forwarded by Jenny Edkins amongst others that, in fact, they should aim at the reverse; that their task must be ‘to challenge the hegemony of the power relations or symbolic order in whose name security is produced, to render visible its contingent, provisional nature.’¹⁶ My method for rendering visible this contingency is to study the onto-theological underpinnings of modern thought on security and community. The goal here is to make philosophically problematical what has been practically axiomatic in international relations; to bring security into question is to bring the entire foundation and architecture of this political construction into question.¹⁷ This stems from my contention that it is only through the destruction of known values that the creation of new values becomes possible. Though it is not my aim to shake the epistemic order of security by simply seeking a new, hegemonic order, it is also true that ‘a concept does not die simply when one wants it to, but only when new functions in new fields discharge it.’¹⁸ Disrupting the terms of security/insecurity should be undertaken as a means to opening new possibilities at

¹⁶ Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back in* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999) p.142

¹⁷ David Campbell and Michael Dillon, *The Political Subject of Violence*(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) p.29

¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, “A Philosophical Concept” in Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor and Jean-Luc Nancy (eds.) *Who Comes After the Subject?* (London: Routledge, 1991) p.94

the margins¹⁹ and to asserting the hope that politics can be something other than the possibility or the instrument for keeping life alive.

Modern security politics are, of course, diverse and heterogeneous. This thesis will undoubtedly fall prey to a certain level of essentialism in an effort to make its point about the problematic philosophical underpinnings of security discourse, and the concomitant assumptions about political community which foster, and are simultaneously created by it. Tackling the notion of politics as management is to expose wholly unmanageable edges (those of *being-together*) and to expose the attempt by managerial “anti-politics” to securitise that which is necessarily ontologically unstable. Thus, although I will undoubtedly be criticised for reifying insecurity, or not taking seriously enough the plight of the global “insecure”, it is for ontological, not moral, reasons, that a management of security cannot be pursued as politics. Politics are totalised and complete within the framework of “security”, control, non-negotiation and stability. For too long the powerful and influential idea that those behind modern thinking and practice of security are labouring under the exigencies of necessity has foreclosed any hope of imagining ways of living and being in common and of conceiving of the full political potentials of community and life.

¹⁹ Anthony Burke, *Beyond Security, Ethics and Violence: War Against the Other* (London: Routledge, 2007) p.42

Chapter 1

Securitisation, the elimination of strangehood and the defence of substantive, liberal political community

It is clear to growing numbers of scholars that modern security politics do not achieve their purported aims, and increasingly serve to bolster particular ways of conceiving of and practising politics. Modern ways of warfare and the politics of securitisation are seen in much of the CSS literature to harm more than protect,²⁰ *insecuritise* rather than securitise,²¹ and depoliticise instead of forwarding political possibility.²² However, rather than exploring in greater depth where the foundations for this “will to security” in modern politics lie, we increasingly see attempts within CSS to broaden the security agenda whilst incorporating traditionalist, militaristic positions,²³ to criticise specific security practices of surveillance, bordering and control,²⁴ or to attempt to bring the security of individuals to the fore.²⁵ It is more

²⁰ Those advocating a normative and emancipatory potential for security, such as theorists within the Aberystwyth School: see, for example, Ken Booth, *Critical Security Studies and World Politics* (London: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2005); Richard Wyn Jones, *Security, Strategy, and Critical Theory* (London: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1999); Matt McDonald and Alex J. Bellamy (2002) “The Utility of Human Security: Which Humans? What Security? A Reply to Thomas & Tow,” in *Security Dialogue*, (33:3), pp.373-377

²¹ Those studying transnational networks and practices of (*in*)securitisation, such as those of the Paris School: see, for example, Didier Bigo and Anastassia Tsoukala, *Terror, Insecurity and Liberty: Illiberal Practices of Liberal Regimes after 9/11* (London: Routledge, 2008) Didier Bigo and R.B.J. Walker (2007) “Political Sociology and the Problem of the International,” *Millennium* 35(3) pp.725-739; Mark B. Salter (2007) “Governmentalities of an Airport: Heterotopia and Confession,” *International Political Sociology*, 1(1) pp.49-66

²² Those looking at the exceptionalising nature and practices which proceed the “securitisation” speech-act, such as those of the Copenhagen School: see, for example, Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1994)

²³ Copenhagen School, see footnote above.

²⁴ Paris School, see footnote above.

²⁵ Aberystwyth School, see footnote above.

interesting and pertinent, I argue in this thesis, to question why are our modern understandings of politics are so reliant, foundationally, on security and to investigate the ways in which this limits and circumscribes political organisation and possibility.

In this first chapter, I situate my work alongside burgeoning literature which criticises both traditional and CSS literatures for their assumption that security is a neutral and desirable aim of politics. Central to such critiques have been efforts by Edkins,²⁶ Michael Dillon,²⁷ David Campbell²⁸ and others to expose the mythical foundations of security, its intimate and co-constitutive nature with insecurity, and the ways in which the promise of security is an impossible and yet crucial foundation of statecraft. Others still, have discussed the militarised and exceptionalising nature of security discourses,²⁹ or the promotion of highly specific and contingent forms of life deemed worthy of protection within them.³⁰ The arguments forwarded challenge the pursuit of security as the ultimate positive value of politics, and these scholars contend that to make security the “end of politics” is depoliticising, highlighting the power-effects which issue from the “securing” of security. I am also interested to engage with the work of scholars who, in the face of problems that are global in scope, and the increasingly unstable ontological foundations of political thought and activity, are critiquing many important myths surrounding the formation of the surrounding

²⁶ Jenny Edkins (2003) “Security, cosmology, Copenhagen,” *Contemporary Politics*, 9(4) pp.361-370

²⁷ Michael Dillon, *Politics of Security: Towards a Political Philosophy of Continental Thought* (London: Routledge, 1996)

²⁸ David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998)

²⁹ Claudia Aradau (2004) “Security and the Democratic Scene: Desecuritization and emancipation,” *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 7(4) pp.388-413

³⁰ Julian Reid, *The Biopolitics of the War on Terror: Life Struggles, Liberal Modernity and the Defence of Logistical Societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008)

nation state in early modernity,³¹ and looking to alternative forms of political organisation and sources of authority than the sovereign state.³² I specifically look to the possibilities for expansion of political community beyond the borders of the sovereign state and the broader critiques of sovereignty contained within contemporary continental political philosophy.³³ With shifting conceptions of security in the post-war period (motivated by the apprehension of irremediable threats at a global level); the events of September 11th 2001 and the ensuing “war on terror” and its aftermath; and current attempts to locate sovereignty above and below the sovereign state, this is a fecund and timely period in which to be studying security and community together.

The implications of thinking within logics of security: Statist bias in CSS

In this section I provide a brief, critical overview of a range of debates relevant to this piece which are taking place within the security studies sub-field. In challenging their underlying assumptions, I place this piece more squarely within movements wishing to engage with modern security practices and discourse in order to fundamentally critique current logics of securitisation. A number of CSS scholars argue in favour of

³¹ See, for example, Benno Teschke, *The Myth of Westphalia: Class, Geopolitics, and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London: Verso, 2003)

³² See, for examples, Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998); Daniele Archibugi; David Held and Martin Köhler (eds.) *Re-imagining Political Community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Jens Bartelson, *Visions of World Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

³³ See, for examples, Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalisation*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007); Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) and *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (London: Harvard University Press, 2000)

an objective definition of security insofar as the critical security theorist can determine which security problems are particularly threatening and a subjective definition insofar as an individual's own definition of security problems should be taken into account.³⁴ As a consequence of retaining the term, and, more importantly, the desire to render subjectivities and politics knowable, controllable and secure, many of the logics that underpin and are legitimated by traditional conceptions of security remain entrenched within critical work.³⁵ Most pertinent for the discussion here is the retention of a liberal political imaginary which views community as an observable and substantive phenomenon which can be harnessed for work within particular political projects.

Logics underpinning the will to security take community to be an absolute end, to such a degree that all other thinking on and possible meaning of the term is annihilated and rendered redundant.³⁶ This can be seen most clearly in orthodox security literature and practice, which pursues the security of the substantive political community that is the sovereign state above all other political values. However, it is also evident in much of the CSS literature. The Aberystwyth School employs Frankfurt School critical theory to advocate an emancipatory security which places individuals at the heart of analysis as referent objects in an apparent attempt to sideline sovereign states' domination of the security agenda. Though this has raised the question of whether a positive value can be assigned to security and therefore challenged the primary importance placed on eliminating sources of insecurity (pervasive in more

³⁴ Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) p.207

³⁵ Kyle Grayson (2008) "Human Security as Power/Knowledge: The Biopolitics of a Definitional Debate," *International Affairs*, 21(3) p.386

³⁶ Jean-Luc Nancy (1992) "The Compearance: From the Existence of "Communism" to the Community of "Existence," *Political Theory*, 20(3) p.374

orthodox accounts), proponents adhere to a statist logic, engaging in only limited ways with the potential to think community differently. States are problematically posited as the communities, or agents, deemed most capable and best-placed to provide security, and by extension –it is argued – emancipation. The pervasive statism within this theory and the failure to look beyond dominant conceptions of political community threatens the internal logic and consistency of the approach and silences alternative, non-dominant, non-substantive approaches to political organisation. The failure to adequately deconstruct and challenge securitiser/securitisee logics renders the “critical” potential of this school limited.

The ways in which community is invoked in much CSS thought is invariably caught within traditional metaphysical notions of the term, where community is something that can serve as a tool in a specific political project. For Booth, ‘community is the site of security’³⁷ implying *a priori*, empirically observable political organisation pre-existing the power relations which arise as a result of security politics. In their recent introductory publication on CSS, Nick Vaughan-Williams and Columba Peoples claim that,

[r]ather than celebrating ‘difference’ for its own sake, CSS argues that it is *emancipatory* community – based around inclusionary and egalitarian notions of identity – that should be promoted over communities that are predicated on internal relations of domination (such as patriarchy) and chauvinistic forms of identity (such as notions of national superiority).³⁸

The lengthy and important debate surrounding the meaning of “emancipation” and “emancipatory” in these contexts aside, it is revealing of the entire discourse of CSS

³⁷ Booth, *Critical Security Studies*, p.278

³⁸ Columbia Peoples and Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010) p.26, emphasis in the original

that community is consistently posited in such empirical, substantive terms. Hence Ken Booth is able to state that,

[a]s a political orientation [CSS] is informed by the aim of enhancing world security through emancipatory politics and networks of community at all levels, including the potential community of all communities – common humanity.³⁹

Booth's invocation of community in this way remains within liberal Western political paradigms, ones which treat and regard community as an end point and as a substantive goal to move towards. He leaves us in danger of placing community at the heart of a specific political project and precludes a truly radical re-envisioning of community, which could not be put to technical, managerial use. Above all, Booth's account betrays a treatment of community as a Rousseauian or Kantian form of destination and presupposition, a common temporal trope in literature on community which I will expand upon in the following chapter.

Mick Dillon challenges the pursuit of security in politics more fundamentally. In fact, he views engagement with both traditional and CSS literature as a fundamental obstacle to thinking about new ways of conceiving of the political due to the failure of both to ask questions of security as such. Instead, it invokes security as a ground and seeks largely to specify what security is, how it might be attained and which are most basic, effective, and cost-effective means of doing so.⁴⁰ Dillon, along with Foucault and Agamben, to whom his thought is indebted, view security through a biopolitical lens and wholly problematise the pursuit of security as part of a broader Western, liberal modernist project to control and manage life. As Foucault contends, the biopolitical apparatus includes 'forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall

³⁹ Booth, *Critical Security Studies*, p.31

⁴⁰ Mark Neocleous, *Critique of Security* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008) p.14

measures[:]...security mechanisms [that] have to be installed around the random element inherent in a population of living beings so as to optimize a state of life.’⁴¹ The notion that we have witnessed the “biopoliticisation”⁴² of war and of security, offers an interesting and worthwhile critique of much existing thinking on security. The human security discourse, for example, defines and enacts the human in biopolitical terms, and actively supports states’ attempts to secure “life” and its properties ahead of its historical focus on sovereign territoriality. The target of much modern security practice is to make live the life of the individual through a complex of strategies initiated at the level of populations. Human security discourse’s frame of intervention, for example, is the health and welfare of populations, necessarily entrenching hegemonic notions of agency and community, which value liberal and hierarchical forms of political organisation above all others. To advocate efforts to secure the individual is to advocate the exercise of sovereign power (and, often, violence) over subjects. David Chandler argues effectively that human security discourse prioritises its responses to populations that are threatened in relation to servicing the maintenance of the global liberal order, linking this servicing to a more intimate connection between sovereign power, biopolitics and the maintenance of post- 9/11 order.⁴³ In vindicating my argument that the will to security is driven by, and fosters, a will to secure specific forms of political community, this connection between the human security discourse preparing conceptually a form of life that is at hand for the

⁴¹ Michel Foucault, *“Society Must Be Defended”: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), p.246

⁴² Michael Dillon and Julian Reid, *The Liberal Way of War: Killing to Make Life Live* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009) pp.15-32

⁴³ David Chandler, *Constructing Global Civil Society: Morality and Power in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.34-45

mounting of proactive sovereign interventions of pre-emption and prevention, is a significant one.⁴⁴

Perhaps the most successful at highlighting this bureaucratic, managerial type of “anti-politics” of security whilst being accepted by the CSS mainstream, are those scholars working loosely under the banner of the “Paris School.” Didier Bigo, for example, studies transnational networks and practices of *insecurity*. Bigo highlights the (in)securitisation process enacted by policies purporting to secure, highlighting not the exceptionalism of security politics but, rather, the more mundane bureaucratic decision of everyday politics and the structures of consumerist society. He focuses upon the,

Weberian routines of rationalisation, of management of numbers instead of persons, of use of technologies, especially the ones which allow for communication and surveillance at a distance through databases and the speed of exchange of information.⁴⁵

The securitisation of societal issues, he contends, raises the issue of protection by *insecuritising* the audience the security discourses are addressing. (In)securitisation translates into a social demand for the intervention of coercive state agencies through reassurance discourses and protection techniques.

However, in highlighting the network of heterogeneous and transversal practices working at the transnational level in order to reveal relational processes of (in)securitisation and (un)freedomisation, the Paris School still falls into the trap of strengthening and giving credence to the security signifier, of reifying security and

⁴⁴ Miguel De Larrinaga and Marc G. Doucet (2008) “Sovereign Power and the Biopolitics of Human Security,” *Security Dialogue* 39(5) p.532

⁴⁵ Didier Bigo and Anastassia Tsoukala, “Understanding (In)security” in Didier Bigo and Anastassia Tsoukala (eds.) *Terror, Insecurity and Liberty: Illiberal Practices of Liberal Regimes after 9/11* (London: Routledge, 2008) p.5

demonising insecurity. Though this approach undoubtedly highlights the ways in which security relates to people or political subjects and provides a different account of the actors involved in managing unease in our societies far more effectively than other “critical” approaches, it does not go far enough in challenging the pursuit of security as an ontological good, or end, of politics. Highlighting the tendency of modern security practices to render us insecure implies that some level of security is desirable; it is still merely a question of finding different ways of achieving this level of security. The critique is not extended adequately enough, however, into the ways in which security is inscribed into the very discourses and practices of liberal modernity. Though Bigo advocates “unmaking the security frame” and replacing the drama of exception for mundane everyday practices in order that we might envisage alternative forms of political order that govern and shape freedom in less exclusionary and violent ways, there is not notion of what would replace it, because there is a lack of focus on the implications of questions of political community in liberal modernity, which depend upon, and foster, logics of security.

Within the CSS literature, community either goes unchallenged, or is posited as an empirically observable phenomenon which can be put forward for use within certain technical political programmes, i.e. that of securing its citizens’ politically unqualified lives. Modern security politics necessarily entail and embody a particular kind of *ordering*.⁴⁶ Placing the life of subjects or communities at the heart of a political project is an inescapable component of the politics of security, and this is not adequately problematised in current CSS literature. It is not enough to ask states to

⁴⁶Jef Huysmans (1998) “Security! What do you mean?: From Concept to Thick Signifier” in *European Journal of International Relations*, 4(2) p.230

step back from providing security or to step down as referent objects of security in the hope that individuals will fill their place, without an understanding of the work that security is doing to produce and reproduce those subjectivities and communities it purports to protect, along with the modes of political organisation that it is obscuring and rendering impracticable.

It is necessary to challenge fundamentally the ontological preoccupation with security and the commitment to politics of securing the subject or the community. To do so is also to challenge Western political thought as a project of making things certain, mastered and thus controllable. Security is much more about calculation and control than it is about concern and care. As Dillon argues, 'Western political thought has been impelled by its metaphysical determination to secure the appropriate theoretical grounds and instrumental means by which security itself could be secured.' But the politics of organisation must be about bringing new possibilities into being, about bringing new ways of being-together into being which necessarily entails uncertainty, instability, negotiation and change.

Security as the will to power of sovereign presence

...despite the absence of any legitimate meta-yardsticks, governments around the world claim to possess an ultimate yardstick in the name of security, the law, human integrity and the liberal ideals of the free market...philosophical thinking offers at least some arguments that stand firmly opposed to such a logic.

Thanos Zartaloudis⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Thanos Zartaloudis, *Giorgio Agamben: Power, Law and the Uses of Criticism* (London: Routledge, 2010) p.xi

To ask questions of the politics of security is to reveal certain assumptions it necessarily holds about political organisation and community to be contingent, and to open up broader questions of liberal modernity. It unmasks some of the fundamental assumptions that underpin Western political and philosophical thought. As Dillon argues, ‘posing the security question necessarily calls into question the way thought itself has been thought.’⁴⁸ In asking philosophical questions of security, we are able to more fundamentally critique the insistence upon the need to secure security which is rendering politics increasingly exclusionary and violent. I aim to reveal the will to security as the will to power of sovereign presence. As well as logics of securitisation attempting to render knowable, and incorporate all uncertainty within an onto-epistemological framework predicated on securing, on reassuring, and eliminating enemies, strangers, and strangeness,⁴⁹ it is concomitantly a reassertion of the necessity of hierarchical, vertical sovereign power for maintaining political order. Sovereignty and security are each seen as conditions of possibility for political life. It is here that numerous assumptions about ideal forms of community and political organisation within security discourse can be located.

This thesis explores the ways in which modern understandings of the politics and modern practices of politics can be seen to derive the requirement of security from requirements of metaphysical truth itself. Dillon phrases it thus:

Security became the predicate upon which architectonic politics discourses of modernity were constructed; upon which the vernacular architecture of modern political power, exemplified by the State, was based; and from which the institutions and practices of modern (inter)national politics, including modern democratic politics, ultimately seek to derive their grounding and foundational legitimacy.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Dillon, *The Politics of Security*, p.19

⁴⁹Zygmunt Bauman, quoted in Huysmans, “Security! What do you mean?” p.235

⁵⁰ Dillon, *Politics of Security*, p.13

It will therefore be necessary to investigate and explore community's absent ground (or, rather, the presence of ground *as absence*)⁵¹ and, in so doing, to unmask Western political thought's inherited onto-theology of security, or the *a priori* argument that proves the existence and necessity of security because of the current widespread, metaphysical belief in it. Within this notion, relations between singularities are regulated, controlled and ultimately destroyed in order that we might remain loyal to vertical, transcendental authority, which is deemed to keep us "secure" and seen as a prerequisite to engagement in political activity and life. As such, as James Der Derian argues, within the concept of security lurks the entire history of Western metaphysics – best described by Derrida as a series of substitutions of centre for centre – in a perpetual search for the 'transcendental signified'. As he notes,

[f]rom God to Rational Man, from Empire to Republic, from King to the People...the security of the centre has been the shifting site from which the forces of authority, order and identity philosophically defined and physically kept at bay anarchy, chaos and difference.⁵²

The will to security, and the desire for substantive political community can each be seen as the search for an Archimedean point 'on which we can safely rest and from which we can set out without fear.'⁵³

A number of scholars questioning notions of political community challenge the view that the sovereign state is the only and ideal type of political community in international relations as opposed to a convenient ideological fiction, on similar

⁵¹ Oliver Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) p.68

⁵² James Der Derian, "The value of security: Hobbes, Marx, Nietzsche and Baudrillard" in David Campbell and Michael Dillon (eds.) *The Political Subject of Violence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) p.95

⁵³ Gottfried Leibniz, *Philosophical Writings*, G.H.R. Parkinson (ed.) (London: Everyman, 1973) p.93

grounds. Discussions on community speak to a wider range of themes and assumptions running through and underpinning Western political thought and practice. The system of sovereign states teaches us that communities cannot operate other than by the exclusion of certain individuals, by the rhetorical and indeed physical expulsion of non-citizens from within their midst. Sovereign power, as perceived by Giorgio Agamben, is the power to determine whether individuals belong inside or outside of community, and, therefore, to grant or deprive them of political rights.⁵⁴ Sovereign line-drawing strategies and a politics of inclusion and exclusion, as Edkins and Véronique Pin-Fat contend, condition to some extent the existence of community and of each and every human being.⁵⁵ Such a community, predicated upon exclusion and on Schmittian contractarian notions, can clearly be seen at work in the discourse of the War on Terror, a discourse which legitimises a level of oppression against excluded groups. This thesis can thus be seen, in part, as an exploration of onto-political underpinnings of modern international politics, in particular that which has the security of populations as its heart and end goal. The project of politics has moved far away from making way for human being's freedom as possibility; this piece aims to challenge this and to suggest that this has much to do with how community is envisaged or, perhaps more importantly, what possibilities are precluded from being envisaged, within international relations literature.

International relations thought constitutes a citadel of metaphysical thought on the political and often actively fosters the closure of political thought and a reliance,

⁵⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *Means without Ends: Notes of Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) p.20

⁵⁵Andreja Zevnik (2009) "Sovereign-less Subject and the Possibility of Resistance," *Millennium*, 38(1) p.85

instead, upon the technologised instrumentalisation of it as representative-calculative thought.⁵⁶ Western thinking has thus far aimed at an ontology of unconditioned uncertainty. Politics is equated with technology and therefore also with metaphysics and contemporary world society is equated with technologised totalitarian politicisation of all life.⁵⁷ Thus, to rethink community and reject modern politics of security is to answer to an unforeseeable event that escapes any instituted order of meaning and constitutes the site where the question of the very meaning of political existence is reopened. It is the reinstating of a politics seeking to answer to the limit of the political – a limit, as Nancy terms it, ‘where all politics stops and begins.’⁵⁸ The political is the place where *community* is brought into play as only a being-in-common can make possible a being-separated.⁵⁹ It is therefore important to ask deeper questions of the politics of security and to take us beyond merely political objections to security (the argument, for example, that the pursuit of security is self-defeating and that security necessarily reduces politics to a “dilemma” among competing “wills” to security.) It is a question of challenging the ontological preoccupation with security and its commitment to politics of securing specific modes and types of political community and organising with one another.

Beyond the study of securitised subjectivity to securitised political organisation

Of the investigations into the concept of security that have preceded this one, some have explored security alongside political subjectivity, and specifically the

⁵⁶ Dillon, *The Politics of Security*, p.34

⁵⁷ Campbell and Dillon, *The Political Subject of Violence*, p. 23

⁵⁸ Christopher Fynsk, “Forward: Experiences of Finitude,” in Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991) p.xxvi

⁵⁹Fynsk, “Forward,” p. xxxvii

existence of a “securitised subjectivity”. Rob Walker, for example, details how modern accounts of security define ‘the conditions under which we have been constructed as subjects subject to subjection. They tell us who we must be.’⁶⁰ This understanding that our subjectivity is bound up with, written by and disciplined through discourses of security, he argues, ‘make[s] any simple, cursory rejection [of the term] at best limited, at worst destined to replicate the terms which must be refused.’⁶¹ These contributions are important to bear in mind when discussing community and security alongside one another. The constitution of the subject certainly entails and is inextricably linked with the constitution of a particular social or symbolic order. Neither one is prior to the other; indeed, notions of priority and separation are themselves bound up with particular modern conceptions of a sovereign subjectivity.⁶² Political philosophy tends to think of community as a “wider subjectivity”⁶³ which has interesting implications but does not extend far enough to highlight the fact that to think of community is to think within an instance of the political. Here, the political is taken to be the site where what it means to *be in common* is open to definition, in opposition to politics which is seen as the play of forces and interests engaged in a conflict over the representation and governance of social existence.⁶⁴ As well as logics of security being keen to posit as known certain notions of political community, they also aim to secure the position of the subject and the nature and stability of political subjectivity.

⁶⁰ R.B.J. Walker, “The Subject of Security” in Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (eds.) *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) p.67

⁶¹ Walker, “The Subject of Security” p.73

⁶²Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations*, p.4

⁶³ Esposito, *Communitas*, p.2

⁶⁴ Christopher Fynsk, paraphrasing Jean-Luc Nancy in Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought*, p.68

Far more important and revealing than attempting to rehabilitate the “security” signifier for good is to challenge the claim that security is or must be retained as the only positive value in world politics. Deeply embedded within modern security politics and discourse and, indeed, within Western modernity itself, is a managerial sort of “anti-politics”, which aims at routinisation, control, certainty and knowledge – processes which are wholly depoliticising, exclusionary, and, ultimately, contingent. The will to security is, more often than not, the will to secure a specific type of substantive, bounded, liberal form of political community rooted in social contractarian thought. An exploration into alternative notions of community or organising politically reveals this most effectively, and reveals the Western political thought which is based around securing the lives of populations or subjects to be totalitarian and based on contingent ontological assumptions posited as stable and necessary.

Chapter 2

Imagining non-managerial community:

Challenges posed to security politics by *inoperativity* and *immunity*

In this chapter I tackle the concept of community, specifically broaching the notions of *inoperativity* and *immunity* as forwarded in the philosophies of Jean-Luc Nancy and Roberto Esposito. I look specifically at how these ideas challenge fundamental assumptions of current modes of liberal political thinking on community as well as their potential contributions for re-envisaging the political and re-orientating away from a politics of security. An understanding of Nancy's notion of *inoperativity* underpins a critique of substantive notions of community which form an important part of the techno-economic political project of security. The idea that community cannot be "put to work" or utilised as a tool in a broader political operation or project is vital for understanding my wholesale critique of the current security politics. Thus, in the first section of this chapter, I discuss the need for a recessed, inoperative domain in order for politics to be properly pursued. This domain is, I argue, incompatible with ideas and logics of security and securitisation. Second, I explore Nancy's take on the concept of being-with and argue that a co-existential ontology – an appreciation that we exist only in relation to one another – is vital in order to forward a valid notion of community, that of a community-of-being. Third, having constructed an ontological framework borrowing from Nancian notions of being-in-common, I am then able to deploy and expand upon Esposito's immunisation

paradigm and to emphasise its potential to provide a strong critique of the social contractarianism that Western liberal thought and political imagination, organisation and practice, including its politics of security, are reliant upon foundationally. It is argued that substantive, non-relational notions of community underpinning securitisation preclude multifarious ways of being-together, which are obscured and disregarded in favour of a contractarian “bond”. In revealing Thomas Hobbes’ social contract, in particular, to be a violent suppression of being-together, I see this “bond”, which is central to the functioning of logics of security, as a violent *ir*-relation, rather than a being-with. It is impossible, then, to break this cycle or “war of securitisation” without a wholesale critique of operative, substantive and non-relational logics of community.

To begin with, I tackle some of the common problems and pitfalls associated with the use of the concept of “community” and defend my use of the term. Despite the efforts by many to deny the centrality of theorising “being-together” within political philosophy, thinking on political community does not leave us. As numerous and varying critiques of the position, efficacy and legitimacy of the traditional sovereign nation-state abound, so too does thinking on political community. Efforts to locate political authority, order, sovereignty, legitimacy and organisation beyond the sovereign state can be seen in the work of English School, cosmopolitan and communitarian thinkers.⁶⁵ Additionally, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have attempted to reinstate Spinozan notions of the “multitude” into Anglophone

⁶⁵ See, for examples, Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Martin Wight (1960) “Why is there no international theory?” *International Relations*, 2(1) pp.35-48; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998)

international relations discourse.⁶⁶ There is, I argue, much contained within thinking about political organisation, and specifically about notions of community, that is useful for approaching some of the deadlocks arising from the globalisation of Western liberal international politics.

An oft-invoked argument for shunning thinking on political community is the danger that thinking on community leads too easily to a totalitarian or fascist political appropriation of the idea. The concern that some form of fictional community will become the intractable, problematic heart of a political project is a very real and legitimate one. The closure of the political and concomitant “descent” into totalitarian politics, which I raised as an important challenge to liberal democracy in the first chapter, is a risk when a foundational, non-fictional and substantive notion of community is propagated and when this is used as a point around which politics can focus its energy on. This thesis is sceptical that Western liberal democracy signals an end to totalitarian politics; in fact, highlighting the assumptions about community which underpin these politics (especially those which are driven by logics of security) reveals the continuities between liberal modes of “anti-politics” and the totalitarian closure of politics. Security politics are a contemporary, albeit vastly different, totalitarian style of politics which closes the political to alternative philosophical concepts. So far, much writing on security has either constituted a denial of being-with, a project to actively destroy the possibility of this, or an unproblematised use of “community” as an operative concept within a wider technical political project. The radical challenge that Nancy and Esposito pose to non-relational, liberal political

⁶⁶ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2005)

community and foundational political and philosophical thought, to which I turn in this chapter, resists the co-optation or re-appropriation for use as totalitarian political practice and eschews thinking politics in terms of certainty and security.

Inoperativity and its challenge to the managerial project of security

There is simply no “work” that community could perform for the “end” of such exposure: it cannot be overcome or put operatively to any social or political task. Rather, community is precisely this exposition of finitude, not a sublation producing a certain utility.
Benjamin Hutchens⁶⁷

It is my contention that traditional metaphysics and concomitant flawed assumptions about political subjectivity and community haunt Western political thought and have led us to engagement in an endless war of securitisation in which the will to security forms the traumatic core of our (a)political projects. Crucially, this will to security denies politics a recessed inoperative domain, which, as Nancy asserts, serves as a shared public space providing politics with sense and measure.⁶⁸ Logics of security reduce politics to the management of life of populations and, as highlighted successfully in the Paris School of CSS, reduce political method and practice to control, surveillance and the recording of data.⁶⁹ Much contemporary political thought, especially that found in international relations discourse and security studies, reifies techno-economical organisation or the “making operational” of the world. Even those scholars who attempt to locate political community and possibilities of being-

⁶⁷ Benjamin Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy* (Chesham: Acumen, 2005) p.117

⁶⁸ Fred Dallmayr, “‘Inoperative’ Global Community? Reflections on Jean-Luc Nancy,” in Darren Sheppard, Simon Sparks, and Colin Thomas (eds.) *On Jean-Luc Nancy: The Sense of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1997) p.183

⁶⁹ Didier Bido, “Delivering Liberty and Security? The Reframing of Freedom When Associated with Security,” in Didier Bido et al (eds.) *Europe’s 21st Century Challenge: Delivering Liberty* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010) pp.13-17. See also, Mark B. Salter (2007) “Governmentalities of an Airport: Heterotopia and Confession,” *International Political Sociology*, 1(1) pp.49-66

together outside the sovereign state conceive of this as a project, as essentially a matter of work, operation or operativity, which is at the root of flawed thinking on community and politics.

History has long been thought on the basis of a lost community to be regained or reconstituted. The natural family, the Athenian city or the Roman republic are all ways in which this lost, or broken, community is exemplified.⁷⁰ Modernity is imbued, as Nancy contends, with thinking about

a lost age in which community was woven of tight, harmonious and infrangible bonds and in which above all it played back to itself, through its institutions, its rituals, and its symbols, the representation, indeed the living offering, of its own immanent unity, intimacy and autonomy.⁷¹

Rousseau's contract can be seen as an example of this mode of thinking as it does not merely institute a body politic but dissolves community into the general political will and, in so doing, also produces mankind itself.⁷² This is because Rousseau substantialises community and proceeds to subordinate it to a "public" will, which, in fact, constitutes a dissolution of bonds. In creating social arrangements, it generates a determined community in the place of a free flow of relations of being-with.⁷³ Similar actions and injuries can be seen in efforts of orthodox security thought and practice which seek to protect the sovereign state as the ideal mode of political organisation to bring order and political life against outside threats to an ideal community that is constantly posited as having existed in the past and/or able to be retrieved in the future.

⁷⁰ Esposito, *Communitas*, p.14

⁷¹ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p.9

⁷² Jean-Luc Nancy, "Finite and Infinite Democracy," in Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, Daniel Bensaïd, Wendy Brown, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Rancière, Kristen Ross and Slavoj Žižek, *Democracy in what State?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) p.58

⁷³ Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy*, p.136

This arises from a failure to grasp community's central dynamic: that of being-with others, also central to the notion of inoperativity. In other accounts of community, including those permeating the security discourse, there is an assumption that there is, somewhere, another substantial basis of being that simply requires a technical programme of realisation in order to unmask it. The assumption in the security literature is that the "security" of subjects and of communities is a prerequisite to the revelation of this other substantial ontological basis. Without security, qualified political life is impossible, but we are led to believe that each of these things is lying in wait just around the corner. It is assumed that a certain substance is immanent to the beings that comprise the community and that, while this substance may be obscured or imperfectly revealed, it merely requires a technical program – one centred on a will to securitise individual subjects or sovereign states – in order to realise its potential. This dynamic, in which a particular concept (or figure) is assumed to represent or comprise the immanent substantial basis of community, is referred to by Nancy as *figuration*.⁷⁴ Figuration, a quasi-messianic concept which is put beyond contestation in the political arena, constitutes, ultimately, a totalitarian philosophical determination of the political.⁷⁵ In much modern Western political thought, this is the will to security. The task at hand, in "figurative" accounts of community is the realisation of the substance that the figure is assumed to represent. All that fails to correspond to the decreed program of realising this immanent substance is disavowed, elided, obscured and ultimately destroyed.⁷⁶ In our times, the task is predicated on the security of subjects, with anything that diverts our attention

⁷⁴ Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, *Retreating the Political*, p.xxiv

⁷⁵ Coward, "Jean-Luc Nancy", p.256

⁷⁶ Ibid.

from this deemed irrelevant. Despite the obvious failure of many efforts to “secure” in a diverse array of contexts, such figures continue to exercise a grip on politics under the assumption that these failings are mere empirical imperfections of transcendental substances that can be remedied by better programs of security or the realisation of the lost basis of community.⁷⁷

How, then, should we conceive of a contrasting, inoperative community? Contrary to the “lost community” paradigm, in which community is lying in wait for the revelation of a substantial basis of being, and rather than being historically superseded by society, community constantly appears *in the wake* of society, as an event.⁷⁸ Community is based, or founded, on the lack which derives from the impossibility of complete immanence and is constituted by an ‘infinite lack of infinite identity.’⁷⁹ Through notions of finitude, we are able to retrace community and to describe the essence of finite being as the sharing of singularities. Here, philosophical understanding of community is stripped bare to its basic elements: the nature of the *clinamen* or of the basic social relation, not among individuals, but among singularities.⁸⁰ These singularities have nothing in common, but, as Nancy explains, ‘they *com-pear* [*com-paraissent*] each time *in common* in the face of the withdrawal of their common being.’⁸¹ And, thus, it is only through the withdrawal of communion, immanence or “work” that community appears. The answer, then, lies in thinking of the finite being as a singular being, which is not the individual.⁸² Community is not to

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought*, p.70

⁷⁹ Andrew Norris (2000) “Jean-Luc Nancy and the Myth of the Common,” *Constellations*, 7(2) p.279

⁸⁰ Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought*, p.72

⁸¹ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p.19

⁸² Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought*, p.73

be thought as the relations between sovereign individualities, but rather as relational singularity.

The individual in liberal modernity is modelled upon the self-sufficient modern subject which, in its monadic existence, does not rely on other individuals. It does not *relate*, it does not *compear* and it does not *share*. Singularities, on the other hand, are exposed to the in-between through their relation of sharing. They are constituted by, as Oliver Marchart explains, ‘the sharing that makes them *others*: other for one another, and other, infinitely other for the Subject of their fusion, which is engulfed in the sharing, in the ecstasy of sharing.’⁸³ One of the central themes and arguments of this chapter is that inoperativity is central to a critique of politics that centres on logics of security and empties politics of contestation, choice, sense and measure. We are caught within the imagination of an “operative” or managerial type of world community, based on fundamental misconceptions surrounding subjectivity and political ontology which has left little room for contesting claims and concepts. The notion of inoperativity centres on questions of Being, in particular that Being is the plurality of always singular instances of being and that this plurality is inscribed into the very differential structure of Being. The question of the possibility of the metaphysics of a non-substantial community centres around and is reliant upon a “coexistential analytic”, in which the question of coexistence is the ontological question *par excellence*.⁸⁴ An understanding of this is central to a thorough critique of the contractarian politics of security, and so it is to the question of Being that I now turn.

⁸³ Ibid., p.74

⁸⁴Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy*, p.116

Community, security & Being: The implications of Nancy's coexistential ontology

The individual is merely the residue of the experience of the dissolution of community.
Jean-Luc Nancy⁸⁵

Claims to the pursuit of security presuppose a referent object in need of securing, one which is able to be secured. There are certain assumptions about the nature of this person, thing or community, to be secured that underlie this claim or desire. In this section I want to investigate Nancy's elaboration of ontology as "being singular plural" and to place the question of community directly alongside that of being. In contradistinction to Hobbes, Rousseau and Kant, Nancy stresses a community-of-being over and above the notion of the being-of-community. Being is necessarily being-with. Even as singularities, for Nancy, we are immediately in a relation of being-with other singularities, thus 'a singularity is indissociable from a plurality'⁸⁶ and '[a]ll experiences of being a self are formed in the context of always already being-with-others.'⁸⁷ The focus, then, is not on how we might establish a bond between us, but rather on how it is that we have come to consider ourselves separate in the first place.⁸⁸ This question encourages us to rethink political organisation and to problematise, perhaps irrevocably and irreparably, a politics of the securing of subjects.

It is often noted in both critical and traditional security literature, as briefly discussed in the first chapter, that understanding how we have been written by security also demands an understanding of how security's logic is bound up in the

⁸⁵ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p.3

⁸⁶ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) p. 32

⁸⁷ Coward, "Jean-Luc Nancy," p.254

⁸⁸ Jenny Edkins (2005) "Exposed Singularity," *Journal for Cultural Research*, 9(4) p.383

promise of existence. We are, for many international relations theorists, unable to live and engage as political subjects without enjoying a certain level of security. Security is posited, Anthony Burke contends, as ‘an overarching political goal and practice that *guarantees existence itself*, which makes the possibility of the world possible.’⁸⁹ Western political thought is thus preoccupied with substantial concern for specifying conditions under which rulers can guarantee their subjects a secure private existence as well as to decide at what price, in terms of obligations and duties, subjects ought to pay for this privilege. Security is necessarily implicated in this. As V. Spike Peterson contends, subjects engage in ‘the exchange of obedience/subordination for (promises of) security’⁹⁰ She goes on to outline the ways in which,

protection systems also reproduce non-participatory dynamics while obscuring accountability of protectees for maintaining boundaries, hierarchies, and identities that are the medium and outcome of protection systems...Identification of the protected with their protectors (as opposed to other protectees), as well as identification of protectors with each other, further complicates alliance formation directed at transforming the system itself. Protection systems also distort the meaning of “consent” by both mystifying the violence that backs up the systemic inequality and perpetuating the illusion of equality among parties to “contractual obligations.”⁹¹

The liberal account of the political constitution of the subject, as brought out by Peterson with notions of distorted consent and the “illusion of equality” within protection discourse, is fundamentally challenged by a Nancian ontology in which being is, in fact, *between-beings*, one of being-*together* or being-*with*. In this respect, Nancy takes his cue from Heidegger, who reinstates *Dasein* (being-there) as *Mitsein* (being-with), with Nancy radicalising this hypothesis to place the “with” at the heart of

⁸⁹ Anthony Burke, *Beyond Security, Ethics and Violence: War Against the Other* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007) pp.28-9, emphasis added

⁹⁰ V. Spike Peterson, *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory* (London: Lynne Reinner, 1992) p.50

⁹¹ Peterson, *Gendered States*, p.50

Being so that the order of ontological exposition in philosophy is reversed and *Mitsein*, in fact, ontologically precedes *Dasein*. The *between*, the *with* and the *together* are all irreducible aspects of Being – which therefore can only be thought of as “being singular plural”.⁹² An ontology of singular-plural Being, which starts from the plural singular of origins (from being-with) radically challenges the methodological individualism of accounts of security which presuppose a subject there to be secured prior to any necessary relation with others. The politics of the securitised, protected subject are founded upon and simultaneously work to create people who are willing to subordinate affirmative values to the “necessities” of security, a logic which, above all, ensures ‘the security of the sovereign, rational self and state.’⁹³

The flawed presupposition of substantial individuals whose essence and being is ontologically predetermined (beings-as-such) as well as rationally, politically and juridically pre-established is an assumption that is often challenged in post-structuralist international relations literature. How can this critique be extended to my discussion of the ideological bias surrounding community which forms an immutable foundation of modern security politics? Contra Descartes, Nancy coins *ego sum expositus* (‘I am first of all exposed to the other, and exposed to the exposure of the other.’)⁹⁴ Within this, lies the proposition that community is not merely ‘the aggregation of individual subjects conceived ontologically as unencumbered and antecedently individuated...[and thus] prior to society’⁹⁵ as it appears within liberal-contractarian traditions. In fact, it is the linkages of sharing that interrupt such

⁹² Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought*, p.79

⁹³ Der Derian, “The value of security,” p.97

⁹⁴ Nancy quoted in Dallmayr, “‘Inoperative’ Global Community? Reflections on Jean-Luc Nancy,” p.182

⁹⁵ Coward, “Jean-Luc Nancy,” p.254

collectivisation and reflect its substantial and operative cohesion that constitute the “sense” of community.⁹⁶ The finitude of singular being is always presented communally, and is always exposed to the judgements of community formative of law. Co-appearing, as these singular beings do, does not mean that there is any “bond” among them, as if something were superimposed upon them. There is merely the material and immaterial spaces of sharing in the “between” and the “with” that singular beings share among themselves. With this understanding, it perhaps becomes possible to imagine community and freedom existing within mutually habitable, rather than viciously and unsustainably circumscribed limits.

Giorgio Agamben⁹⁷, Maurice Blanchot⁹⁸, Françoise Dastur⁹⁹ and Alphonso Lingis¹⁰⁰ have each engaged in a rethinking of *Mitsein*, exploring the implications of regarding ‘being-with’ as more primordial than ‘being’ and the consequent priority of the question of community to that of being. The emphasis on *Mitsein* signals a move from a thinking of being as substance to one which thinks being as act. This is how these accounts of community differ significantly from those which call for a world community,¹⁰¹ a common humanity,¹⁰² or from liberal cosmopolitan calls for the transformation of political community.¹⁰³ The *act* is motivated by the excessive

⁹⁶ Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy*, p.105

⁹⁷ See, for example, Giorgio Agamben’s concept of “whatever being” in Agamben, *The Coming Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993)

⁹⁸ Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community* (New York: Midpoint Trade Books Inc, 2006)

⁹⁹ Françoise Dastur (2011) “The Question of the Other in French Phenomenology,” *Continental Philosophy Review*, 44(2) pp.165-178

¹⁰⁰ Alphonso Lingis, *The Community of those who have Nothing in Common* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994)

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Jens Bartelson, *Visions of World Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

¹⁰² As invoked by Ken Booth in *Critical Security Studies and World Politics* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), p.31

¹⁰³ Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998)

character of the relation of the I to the Other, with the excess generating a movement or a dynamic sharing of the world between us. In this understanding, community is not a substance that is shared, but a dynamic movement of sharing. The shift from a substantial to a dynamic conception of community appears to offer a philosophical questioning of being and community which escapes the strictures of substantialist metaphysics.¹⁰⁴

The will to security and its inextricable link with the spectre of insecurity demands a subordination of affirmative becoming, and fosters, as James Der Derian asserts, ‘a herd morality which enslaves through its affirmation of life as slavery.’¹⁰⁵ Writers who (implicitly or explicitly) adopt a co-existential ontology, on the other hand, are able to explore possibilities of finding grounding and foundational legitimacy for modern democratic politics away from the state, away from the institutions of international politics and away from substantive notions of individual being. For Agamben, for example, the novelty of what he optimistically terms the “coming politics” or the “coming community” is that it will no longer be a struggle for the conquest or control of the state, but a struggle between the state and the non-state (humanity), an insurmountable disjunction between “whatever” singularity and the state organisation.¹⁰⁶ Whatever singularities, he explains, cannot form a *societas* because they do not possess any identity to vindicate nor any bond of belonging for which to seek recognition.¹⁰⁷ In the final instance the state can recognise any claim for identity – even that of a state identity within a state. What it cannot tolerate is that

¹⁰⁴ Howard Caygill, “The Shared World – Philosophy, Violence, Freedom,” in Darren Sheppard, Simon Sparks and Colin Thomas (eds.) *The Sense of Philosophy: On Jean-Luc Nancy* (London: Routledge, 1997) p.22

¹⁰⁵ Der Derian, “The value of security,” p.157

¹⁰⁶ Agamben, *The Coming Community*, p.84

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

the singularities form a community without affirming an identity, or the idea that humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging.¹⁰⁸ These ideas are explored effectively by a number of postcolonial scholars and others who challenge the reification of sovereignty and the nation-state within international relations and the unachievable demands that they place on subaltern subjects, for example, indigenous populations.¹⁰⁹

And thus we can link being-with back to inoperativity. In this understanding, community is made by the retreat or subtraction of the fulfilled infinite identity of community – what Nancy terms its “work.” It is through this lack of a particular substance of being – contra liberal and nationalist conceptions of community – that we are able to realise an unmanageable, “unworking” or “inoperative” community beyond our instrumental control. Political programs imply this work, either as the product of the working community, or else the community itself as work. But, in fact, it is the work that the community does *not* do and that it *is* not that forms it. The community that becomes a single thing (be it a body, a mind, a fatherland, or a leader) necessarily loses the *in* of being-*in*-common, losing the *with* or the *together* that defines it. It yields its being-together to a being *of* togetherness. The truth of community, on the contrary, resides in the retreat of such a being and hence Being itself comes to be defined as relational, as non-absoluteness, and as *community*.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, Karena Shaw, *Indigeneity and Political Theory: Sovereignty and the Limits of the Political* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008)

¹¹⁰ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p.6

According to contractarian notions of sociality, by contrast, communities are groups of pre-existing individuals whose bonds politics works to tie or untie.¹¹¹ I now explore the contention that the community which features in accounts of modern liberal politics of security is what Roberto Esposito would term an immunised community or *immunity*. This would support Nancy's contention that the violent repression of being-in-common is 'the permanent rule of Western thought.'¹¹² Within the political imaginary of security politics, communities are rendered "immune", that is, the "immunisation" project of modernity has been directed against the law of associated coexistence and they have been left bare.¹¹³

Immunity and the violence enacted by liberal social-contractarian thought

[T]he Leviathan-State coincides with the breaking of every communitarian bond, with the squelching of every social relation that's foreign to the vertical exchange of protection – obedience.
It is the bare relation of no relation.
Roberto Esposito¹¹⁴

In revealing liberal community as *immunity*, Esposito looks to the complex and combined concept of *munus* from the Latin *communitas*. *Munus* can be seen as the dialectics of community; at once 'gift and obligation, benefit and service rendered, joining and threat.'¹¹⁵ Modern liberal politics and especially, perhaps, those of war and the pursuit of security, attempt the suppression of the former concepts and the furthering of the latter. The social contract at the heart of the politics of protection and security is, thus, the absence of *munus* and the concomitant loss of a dialectical

¹¹¹Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy*, p.137

¹¹² Nancy, "The Compearance," p.374

¹¹³ Esposito, *Communitas*, p.12

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.14

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.13

understanding of community. Modern “contractarian” individuals, as I have previously mentioned, are “absolute” individuals, bordered in such a way that they are isolated and protected from one another. However, this isolation, and the contract itself, can only be achieved if they are “freed” in advance from the debt that binds them one to the other. Thus, an immunised community is one in which individuals are released from, exonerated, or relieved of the contact that exposes them to the contagion of the relation with others which could lead to possible conflict.

For Esposito, the philosopher who followed this logic to its extreme theoretical consequence was Hobbes. What men have in common, what makes them more like each other than anything else, is their generalised capacity to be killed. As Agamben consistently asserts ‘[t]he first foundation of political life is a life that may be killed, which is politicised through its very capacity to be killed.’¹¹⁶ Political community is based on the possibility of this punishment. Thus, for Hobbes, *communitas* (*cum* with *munus* or a sharing of *munus*) is to be feared; it carries with it the gift of death. In order to protect, or securitise, we must “immunise” ourselves beforehand and, in doing so, negate the very foundations of community.¹¹⁷ In Hobbes, this expresses itself in his eagerness to understand causes in order facilitate the development of a science that can make us masters and possessors of nature thus enabling us to eliminate the danger of violent death.¹¹⁸ Esposito posits that modernity underwent a process of auto-immunisation; immunisation brought modernity into existence, and modernity started when politics was coupled with biology and centred on the survival and

¹¹⁶ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p.89

¹¹⁷ Esposito, *Communitas*, p.13

¹¹⁸ Michael Allen Gillespie, *Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) p. 209

reproduction of life. In this way, Hobbes represents the paradigmatic philosopher of modernity, since with his philosophy the question of an immunitary self-preservation of life came to the centre of political theory and praxis.¹¹⁹ Nowhere does this manifest itself more clearly than within modern logics of securitisation.

Our existence is dominated by fear and insecurity. Peculiar to our modern life is a constant demand for protection with new, imaginary, and concrete borders emerging everywhere. We feel as if our lives are threatened from all sides and demand, more and more, immunisation from these threats. The relationship with others seems to involve the threat of contamination and, although Esposito does not deny that immunity is necessary for the survival of an organism, if it grows in excess, it leads to the death of the organism. The modern securitised state does not eliminate the fear from which it is originally generated; in fact, more worryingly, it is founded precisely on fear as the motor and guarantee of the state's functioning. In this paradoxical situation, "common ground" is shifted from within to without and, as Esposito contends,

[i]t is as if the victimizing mechanism suitable for maintaining the community were to determine at the same time an absolute exteriorization that subtracts community from itself: the "common" now describes in fact the enemy that attacks it and the power that keeps it united against the enemy.¹²⁰

Modern political thought on security and the sovereign state sees an acceptance that the relation between individuals is destructive and that the only route of escape and hope for salvation from this is the destruction of the relation itself. Hence, the drastic

¹¹⁹ Roberto Nigro, "Roberto Esposito: *Termini della Politica. Comunità, Immunità, Biopolitica*," *Continental Philosophy Review*, 42(4) p.607

¹²⁰ Esposito, *Communitas*, p.25

elimination of every kind of social bond is necessitated.¹²¹ Only by dissociating themselves absolutely from any relation can individuals avoid lethal contact. Agamben and Alain Badiou have each shown that the state is not founded on a social bond but, rather, on its dissolution and unbinding.¹²² Sovereign subjects are those that have nothing in common since everything is divided (not shared) between “mine” and “yours”.¹²³ This dovetails with Nancian ontology and Nancy’s claim that modern philosophy and politics are constantly engaged in a project to repress the “with” of being-with.

As a consequence of the destruction of relationality, ‘[l]ife is sacrificed to the preservation of life’ and community is the victim of this dialectic.¹²⁴ The paradoxical and irrational nature of the sum of refusals out of which sovereign authorisation is made is revealed. Thus ‘[t]he modern subject who enjoys civil and political rights is itself an attempt to attain immunity from the contagion of the possibility of community.’¹²⁵ Similar themes can be seen in the figure of Agamben’s *homo sacer* who is at once, and paradoxically, included in the social order by his very exclusion. Exclusion from the protections and official punishments of the political order is the ultimate punishment, meaning that exclusion from the political order is itself a relationship to the political order.¹²⁶ Contractarian thought attempts to demonstrate the manner in which the linkages between individuals constitute social reality, but, in

¹²¹ Ibid., p.27

¹²² Agamben, *The Coming Community*, p.85 and Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (New York: Continuum, 2005) p.8

¹²³ Esposito, *Communitas*, p.28

¹²⁴ Ibid., p.14

¹²⁵ Timothy Campbell, “Bios, Immunity, Life: The Thought of Roberto Esposito,” *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) p.xi

¹²⁶ Adam Kotsko, “Dismantling the Theo-political Machine: On Agamben’s Messianic Nihilism,” in A.P. Smith and D. Whistler (eds.) *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern: New Essays in Continental Philosophy of Religion* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) p.212

fact, it eradicates them in the name of political standards of appropriation.¹²⁷ The politics of security are impoverished by its presumption of “the political” in terms of contractually constituted and tacitly bound subjectivity as if there are no ties *prior* to the contract for the provision of security. The nihilistic and destructive character of this decision to sacrifice life to the preservation of life, is a theme to which I will return in the following chapter.

Away from security and operation, towards a politics of unworking

This chapter has challenged the liberal, substantive notions of community permeating security discourse and practice which treat of community as simply the result of an empirical gathering of political subjects. Modern politics of security and the logics underpinning them are founded upon the liberal-contractarian tradition which takes humans as solitary in nature and attempts to reconcile the conflicts that it assumes will occur between these individuals in their attempt to share space. This tradition, as Coward asserts, ‘assumes community as an antecedent, contingent aspect of being (almost a nuisance), not essential to it.’¹²⁸ A challenge to this thinking is offered by Nancy’s co-existential analytic which encourages us to question not only how we can be together, but how we ever managed to imagine ourselves as separated from one another in the first place.

Community, rather than constituting a substantial and bordered point on a map, is made by the retreat or subtraction of its work – or of the infinite lack of infinite identity. It is through this lack of a particular substance of being that we are

¹²⁷ Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy*, p.139

¹²⁸ Coward, “Jean-Luc Nancy,” p.255

able to realise an “inoperative” community beyond our instrumental control. Modern security practices imply operativity and attempt to put community to work within a managerial political program, obscuring the fact that it is the work that the community does *not* do that forms it. Challenging hegemonic power structures, including that of security theory and practice requires a non- or anti-managerial outlook. The notion of an “inoperative community” serves as a bulwark both against a totalising globalism dominated by hegemonic power and against the surrender of politics to the relentless self-interest of individualistic agents (be these states, corporations or private individuals).¹²⁹ All of the work done to realise a substantial basis for being, of which modern politics of security are a part, is perpetually undone by the existential priority of relationality and without a theory of being which hinges on relationality, we are destined to remain within the violent logic of securitisation to which we have become accustomed. A non-managerial politics of unworking is incompatible with notions of bordered individual sovereign subjects, with social contractarian thought and with the will to security that stems from these.

Unworking first comprises a return the origins and foundations of Western thinking on security and, above all, to challenging the current dominant ways of approaching philosophically these origins. It does not merely entail a question of replacing the politics of security with a “politics of community.” Nancy fails in *The Inoperative Community* to answer the charge that community, as philosophy’s responsibility after nature, is still just one more myth in myriad narratives of nature. In problematising the foundations of Western thinking on security, it is not adequate to posit community as an answer, as merely the story of another coming, ‘the last god’,

¹²⁹ Dallmayr, “‘Inoperative’ Global Community? Reflections on Jean-Luc Nancy,” p.193

or a new poiesis of world.¹³⁰ Nor is it a case of positioning relationality as a new, revived, desirable onto-theological discourse after numerous attempts to locate meaning and foundation for political thought have manifestly failed. These are the themes which motivate the final chapter of this thesis; the philosophical approaches necessitated in order to avoid reviving onto-theological discourse perhaps offer the most promising way out of the impasse that logics of securitisation and of “secure” community currently constitute within international relations thought.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.192

Chapter 3

Onto-theologies of security and community:

Rethinking international relations through notions of encounter

There are many questions, posited as perennial, that the study and practice of security, within broader international relations discourse, claim to address. Many of these are the very same questions that thinking on political community is trying provide answers to. In this chapter, I explore a number of these, arguing that alongside radically different thinking on community, it is also necessary to approach alternatively the seemingly immutable foundations of international relations thought in order to expose the war of securitisation in which we find ourselves as ideological and contingent. Logics of securitisation, as well as being necessitated by, and simultaneously fostering liberal, substantive notions of political “immunity,” also work to control and manage the aleatory element of life and death. The same might be said of much thinking on community. As Nancy asserts,

[c]onceiving of singular resistances (such as death) that disrupt the ever-threatening closure of substantial communities under given conventions and that open singular beings to the circulation of sense is both necessary for, and frustrating of, any contemporary conception of community.¹³¹

For many, security through sovereignty, rather than a political choice, is a necessary reaction to an anarchical condition. Security and order are posited as conditions of possibility for community and, more radically still, the thought of

¹³¹ Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy*, p.106

community and our desire for it is often seen to be little more than a belated invention that tries to respond to the harsh reality of modern experience.¹³² In order to respond to such questions, it is necessary to show that both the will to security, and the closely inter-related technologised and managerial political thinking on community is a component of the broader Western political and philosophical thinking which seeks metaphysical ground, in short, in order that *something* is thought as opposed to nothing.¹³³ As Dillon asserts, ‘the fate of metaphysics and the fate of the politics of security are inextricably intertwined.’¹³⁴ Metaphysically determined communities are a foundational requirement to security.

In this, my final chapter, I briefly explore the philosophical and onto-theological foundations of the will to security which will help us to understand the ways in which logics of securitisation work to advocate bounded, contractarian, operative community within liberal political thought and, more importantly, to foreclose all alternatives. In this chapter, I link both the impulse to know and see absolutely and the fear of the ‘catastrophic threat-event’¹³⁵ that is the breakdown of order at the heart of modern security politics, to an onto-theological impulse as a desire for pure fulfilment and to liberal political thought grounded in the ideas of fear, finitude and salvation. I argue that we must adopt a radically different approach to foundations in both philosophy and politics, and further advocate the “unworking” of politics in order to break out of the war of securitisation deadlock in which we find ourselves.

¹³² Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p.10

¹³³ Dillon, *Politics of Security*, p.19

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.27

¹³⁵ Michael Dillon (forthcoming, 2011) “Specters of Biopolitics: Finitude, *Eschaton*, and *Katechon*,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 110(1) p.784

Origins and foundations of the will to security

From “lost” communities and the origins of the social contract, to contemporary discourses of protection and risk, the politics of security, and that of Western political and philosophical thought more generally, is the search for foundations and representation when it is becoming increasingly apparent that there is very little from which to ground our thinking on the political. To think without security politics and rather, with the unworking of politics and community, is also to think alongside the absence of metaphysical yardsticks, think beyond political foundations and at the “end” of politics. This mode of thinking is, as Nancy claims, ‘a blessing and a defect at the same time – an anomaly never felt more keenly than we feel it today.’¹³⁶ Our task is to work out where this blessing and defect might respectively be leading us.

Security politics are predicated on the fear of the vastly misunderstood origins surrounding the birth of the sovereign state and the return to a Hobbesian state of nature. The origins of the project of modernity, based as it was on fear and possible salvation, seem to determine its outcome. It is therefore to origins that I now turn, in order to argue that we have inherited an onto-theology of security and that these logics (and the politics which stem from them) start to make less sense if we unpack and critique this. It is possible to adopt a radically different approach to origins which

¹³⁶ Nancy, “Finite and infinite democracy,” p.62

eschew the onto-theological ones that we have inherited, with an understanding of Louis Althusser's aleatory materialism and the notion of the "encounter."¹³⁷

Onto-theology, as Coward contends,

refers to the manner in which an ontology, or theory of being, is predicated on a transcendent value (a value that is taken to be a universal essence independent of any particular empirical circumstances). In other words, the philosophical search for the ground of being (a universal truth), and the theological search for that which explains being (God as the creator) are joined into one.¹³⁸

The recent theological turn in continental philosophy, much of which is, for Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler, a reaction to the '*theologisation of philosophy*,'¹³⁹ is offering political philosophers new avenues for thinking and, in particular, for challenging the apparent "completion of the political" that I referred to at the opening of the thesis. The aim of many, including this author, is to attempt to liberate philosophy, along with political thinking, from theological constraints and to challenge the revival of onto-theological discourses that clearly permeate writing on community and security in an attempt to deconstruct them and thus free thinking on the political.

Much Western liberal thinking on community can be seen as an extension of Christian eschatology. Global politics are, I have argued, governed by a single, dominant principle; that of attending to a messianic and salvific will to security. Alongside this, we see the securitisation project justified by the pretensions of

¹³⁷ Written in the final decade of his life, the ideas found in the collection of essays published recently in Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-1987* (London: Verso, 2006) offer interesting and difficult philosophical challenges to contemporary international relations thought.

¹³⁸ Coward, "Jean-Luc Nancy," p.260

¹³⁹ Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler, *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern: New Essays in Continental Philosophy of Religion* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) p.2, emphasis in the original

enlightenment and secularisation discourses, in which God has apparently been replaced by man's reason and will. As Dillon argues, '[s]ecularization theses flatten the violent differences that persisted within the medieval church just as much as they exaggerate the extent to which the modern problematization of politics and rule has been secularized.'¹⁴⁰ Any new accounts of community within international relations have an important and pervasive onto-theological foundation to contend with. Similarly, discourses of security which espouse the securing of humankind or "humanity" must search for the assumptions rooting claims, for instance the contention that we all share something essential which sovereign power and liberal political community are able to "secure". To fail to do so only revives and strengthens onto-theological discourses and, I argue in this essay, problematic discourses of sovereignty, security and bounded community.

Thinking on Western liberal political community, and, indeed, much international relations thought, is centred on the Hobbesian social contract, which is itself rooted in Christian conceptions of community alongside fear, and the notion that man can and must master nature. As Der Derian contends,

Hobbes provides onto-theological foundations of an epistemic realism, in the sense of an ethico-political imperative embedded in the nature of things. The security of epistemic realism is ontological, theological and teleological: that is, metaphysical.¹⁴¹

In the modern, Hobbesian perception of community, the love for one's neighbour is directly proportional to the memory of common danger that we share. If the community of sin from which we originate is marked by fear, no-one can be secure in

¹⁴⁰ Dillon, "Specters of Biopolitics," p.787

¹⁴¹ Der Derian, "The value of security," p.99

this life, as it is literally besieged by death.¹⁴² As Gillespie contends, according to Hobbes,

[t]he world for natural man is a dark place ruled by a mysterious and indefinable force that ultimately produces our death which pushes us ultimately toward an encounter with the reality of the natural world, facilitating the development of a science that would make us masters and possessors of nature and enable us to eliminate the danger of violent death.¹⁴³

Modern security politics are motivated, I argue, by this Hobbesian fear of violent death, which is inextricably linked to the fear of a breakdown of order *tout court*. As Dillon asserts, '[t]he catastrophic threat-event of the dissolution of the temporal order of things is continuously also interrogated to supply the governing technologies, by which the political order is regulated in peace to be "fit" for war and is regulated so as to resist the same catastrophic threat-event.'¹⁴⁴ Dillon thus terms modern international politics a "*katenchontic* war of endless securitization."¹⁴⁵ Arguing that security politics contain a kind of political eschatology (i.e. we work on the assumption of the coming end of things), he explains the *katechon* as the desire to secure against this end, in order to avoid, at all costs, the "catastrophe" that would be the dissolution of the normal order of things. Ideas of eschatology, of salvation, and a desire for belonging to God or to the sovereign, return us to the ideas of a lost oneness that never was that also permeate traditional thinking on community.¹⁴⁶ This is of concern because, along with the promise of an *eschaton* within modern security politics – determined as they are by their form as politics thought in the last light of things – is the indispensability of the *katechon*. This is due to the aporetic faith of

¹⁴² Esposito, *Communitas*, p.12

¹⁴³ Gillespie, *Theological Origins of Modernity*, p.209

¹⁴⁴ Dillon, "Specters of Biopolitics," p.784

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Dillon, *Politics of Security*, p.31

political modernity: one of a justice not in this life, but of a justice to come. The katechon is underpinned and maintained by the ever-presence of fear which is reduced by the social contract but does not recede and is not forgotten.¹⁴⁷

In the second chapter, I mentioned Nancy's messianic notion of figuration and the way in which, implied within thinking on community is the idea that we are waiting for a figure, person or concept to reveal a hidden, substantial basis for being that has thus far been obscured. I suggested that in much of Western liberal political thinking, this figure is the will to security. The will to security is the onto-theological gesture that simultaneously attempts to name the ground of being and yet place it beyond question or to make it an assumption or article of faith.¹⁴⁸ This is based on assumptions of, and in order to safeguard, liberal political community and sovereignty. The parallels between the sovereign and God are well-known to readers of Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology*.¹⁴⁹ Schmitt describes the social contract thus: 'the terror of the state of nature drives anguished individuals to come together, their fear rises to an extreme: a spark of reason (*ratio*) flashes, and suddenly there stands in front of them a new god.'¹⁵⁰

This powerful narrative acts to bolster the notion, pervasive in international relations discourses which have typified the Westphalian era, that states exhibit an inner circle of harmony and progress within an outer circle of the eternal recurrence of

¹⁴⁷ Esposito, *Communitas*, p.24

¹⁴⁸ Coward, "Jean-Luc Nancy," p.260

¹⁴⁹ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004)

¹⁵⁰ Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*, trans. George Schwab and Erna Hilfstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) p.31

competition and conflict.¹⁵¹ As Linklater asserts, '[t]he tyranny of the concept of the sovereign nation-state has impoverished the Western political imagination, and left it ill-prepared for the current challenge of rethinking the foundations of modern community.'¹⁵² Modern security studies and politics serve only to fuel this and to render Western thought increasingly impoverished and political possibility foreclosed. The katechontic will to security acts to produce and reproduce certain operative, circumscribed, sovereign forms of political community.

Aleatory materialism and a philosophy of the encounter: Challenging the will to power of sovereign presence

In order to understand how this production and reproduction takes place, and, in so doing, to fundamentally challenge the ontology of security and community (as well as other building blocks of IR, such as sovereignty, the state, order, and international anarchy), I consider at this juncture the potential of Louis Althusser's aleatory materialist philosophy of the encounter. Althusser thinks about origins in terms of moments of contingent *encounter* for which a notion of the aleatory is necessitated.¹⁵³ He stresses the importance of the encounter in relation to the emergence of capitalism in Europe – the existence of which must be thought of as alongside its non-existence in order to emphasise the process of establishing the accomplished fact rather than thinking the accomplished fact itself – but applied this equally usefully when talking about the emergence of the state. In doing so, he was able to fundamentally challenge idealist and teleological accounts of both the

¹⁵¹ Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, p.35

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p.34

¹⁵³ Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-1987* (London, Verso, 2006) pp.258-265

formation of the state and of capitalism. It is through a radically different approach to origins – as encounters – that we might discover a route to challenging fundamentally the politics of security and liberal notions of immunised, bounded community.

For Agamben, the problem at stake in political thought is the ‘rethinking of...a presupposed condition of relevance or possibility and more generally the rethinking of the very act of transmission of traditions as a problem, as an embarrassment even, rather than as a presupposed and unthinkable dogma.’¹⁵⁴ It is with aleatory materialism, and its emphasis on encounter, contingency and chance, perhaps, that we see the most fundamental rejection of the cogent necessity of old models and the site of the greatest opening up of possibilities for thinking differently about security and the state as ideal political community, along with their respective positions within international relations. Rather than viewing the world as a *fait accompli*, the encounter reveals that which makes the *fait accompli*, requiring us to look at the way in which the state (as ideal type of political community, necessitating an endless war of securitisation in order to protect it as such) is produced through an *ex nihilo* encounter, rather than as a teleology forming an immutable building block of international relations theory.

Thus we can begin to understand Nancy’s assertion of community as non-necessity or as an escape from teleology. Community is not something that may be produced and instituted or whose essence could be expressed in a work of any kind, and thus it cannot be the object or *telos* of a politics.¹⁵⁵ In fact, despite Rousseauian assertions, there is no absent foundation that could act as the present ground on

¹⁵⁴ Zartaloudis, *Giorgio Agamben*, p.xiii

¹⁵⁵ Fynsk, “Forward,” p.x

which community could be built. Continuing to uphold notions of community as *immunity* is to fail to escape violent logics of security. What the community sacrifices to its own self-preservation is not other from itself but, rather, it is sacrificed in the sacrifice not only of the enemy but also of every single member of community, since every member finds in its own being the originary figure of the *first* enemy. Sacrifice responds to this origin, to the fear that the origin provokes and infinitely reactivates it in a circle from which we still have not emerged.¹⁵⁶ To challenge this opens up the possibility of challenging other ideological founding assumptions of international relations, such as sovereignty and the false dichotomy between order and disorder. It also opens up political possibility surrounding political organisation.

It is clear that we have come to privilege the sovereign state as the sole and best provider of security. Richard Ashley notes that the privileging of certain terms as a “higher reality” casts others in ‘only in a derivative and negative way...as something that endangers this ideal.’¹⁵⁷ If security is to be understood in the forms explored throughout this thesis as a logic embedded in tying down, making knowable and certain, and demanding a totalised and hegemonic subjectivity, then it is not a case of changing provider or referent within this project. Whatever is seen to challenge the project of security, whoever is posited as a possible alternative agent other than the state and whatever alternative notions of political community to be “secured” are forwarded, are each going to be seen to endanger the ideal of security. It is with a critique of security such as the one offered in this thesis that we might challenge sovereign power and the biopolitical management of life. Thus, the more interesting

¹⁵⁶ Esposito, *Communitas*, p.34

¹⁵⁷ Ashley, “Untying the Sovereign State,” p.230

challenge might not be the resistance to a *particular* sovereign order of security, but to the disruption of security as a sovereign order, as a challenge to sovereignty itself, an idea that has been explored by Edkins and Veronique Pin-Fat.¹⁵⁸ Perhaps the loss of the theological sovereign thus opens the possibility of a new sense of politics, and raises the question of how the sense of being-in-common can make itself 'sovereign in a new way.'¹⁵⁹

Efforts on the part of some scholars to move beyond the state in order to try and locate political life and community often fail because their theories and political projects are predicated on the necessary existence of the state, concomitant logics of security, and the reality of these as accomplished facts as the guarantee of their durability.¹⁶⁰ Any notion of an aleatory encounter and the profound implications of thinking in this way are rendered peripheral. Utopian political projects are pursued in order to try to transcend sovereignty and to locate the political outside the state. Without breaking free from the liberal, cosmopolitan model, which sees the state as immutable, these projects continue to suffer from the illusion of representation and do not escape teleology or idealism, serving ultimately to give new life to onto-theological discourses attempting to imbue meaning onto politics transcendently where, in fact, none exists. A philosophy of the encounter, one in which we think in terms of no determination of the being which issues from the 'taking-hold' of the encounter as being prefigured, allows us to grasp the political immanently, to think of

¹⁵⁸ Jenny Edkins and Véronique Pin-Fat (2005) "Through the wire: Relations of Power and Relations of Violence," *Millennium* 34(1) pp.1-24

¹⁵⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2008) p.91

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, Hedley Bull (1979) "The State's Positive Role in World Affairs", *Daedalus*, 108(4) pp.111-123

world-becoming as 'detheologized',¹⁶¹ that is to say without recourse to an image or representation of the world: the world is simply the accomplished fact. Neither security nor community can serve as the figures or foundations on which to think and build politics if they are re-thought in these ways.

¹⁶¹ Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, pp.45-54

Conclusion

Death is the scandal, the ultimate humiliation of reason.
It saps the trust in reason and the security that reason promises.
Zygmunt Bauman¹⁶²

It is the contention of this thesis that liberal political *immunity* and its basis in immunised Hobbesian social contractarian thought is dependent on insecurity and exclusion for its survival as such and that the study of security, by both orthodox and “critical” scholars, does not fully problematise this dependency. Much of the security literature (explicitly in the case of orthodox studies, and implicitly, I argue, in the case of CSS) advocates the protection and consolidation of operative, immunised communities which foreclose and preclude multifarious ways in which we might be together. Western politics as a vast machine that attempt to capture and control life,¹⁶³ repress any possibility of being-in-common. Nowhere do we recognise its overreach more keenly than in modern discourse and practice of security, and it is this problem that this thesis has addressed. Modern politics of security preclude the opening up of politics to negotiation, contestation, and the productive interplay of competing philosophical claims regarding community. It has been argued that the politics of security, which attempt to limit the aleatory element of life and death, fail abjectly to answer questions of community as relationality and that the liberal contractarian thought which underpins it actively works to destroy possibilities of being-with one another.

¹⁶²Zygmunt Bauman, *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992) p.15

¹⁶³Kotsko, “Dismantling the Theo-political Machine,” p.212

It has been my intention to deconstruct our thinking on community so that we might unmask its contingency and to highlight how the will to security, in its efforts to physically or symbolically secure space, prohibits any notion of space as continually negotiated.¹⁶⁴ The Hobbesian social contract does not make sense and does not function as such without relation in and of itself being immunised and, ultimately, destroyed. At the bottom, that which the community wants to exclude is that which does not let itself be identified in it and thus exclusion is an illusion.¹⁶⁵ Exclusionary community which, I argue, a politics of security is reliant on, is both morally and ontologically untenable as relationality is dependent upon a constant unworking in order to make sense as such. Communities – as singularities facing each other in death – are necessarily radically unmanageable, unstable and insecure. Rather than an empirical reality or presence, what we share is the *lack* of community.¹⁶⁶

Community is an open spacing of others that excludes the possibility of foundation, even the foundation seemingly created from the exclusion of others. It is this sharing, this being-with or co-appearance to one another as such vulnerable beings that constitute insubstantial community. This sharing serves as the groundlessness that singularises and differentiates beings as such.¹⁶⁷ The politics of security, however, attempt to “work” something which is “unworkable” and “inoperative.” Logics of security work to silence any alternative thinking on community and, speaking only within the prevailing paradigm, bolster ideas of hierarchical authority and of sovereignty, refusing the recognition of dependencies

¹⁶⁴ David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro, *Moral Spaces: Rethinking Ethics and World Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) p.xviii

¹⁶⁵ Nancy, “The Compearance,” p.392

¹⁶⁶ Roberto Esposito, (2006) “The Immunization Paradigm,” *Diacritics*, 36(2) p.34

¹⁶⁷ Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy*, p.106

upon any open community, and ultimately eradicating the singularities of the entities that compose it.¹⁶⁸ There is a largely unwritten and unproblematised collective denial within thinking on security of the idea that, currently, political communities are indebted to insecurity for their existence and that this immunitary logic permeates much of international relations discourse. The roots of security politics in the Hobbesian state of generalized conflict, and the institution of sovereign power that acts to protect, or better immunize, the community from a threatened return to conflict, links sovereign power theoretically to communal self-preservation and self-negation.

Richard Wyn Jones warned in 1999 that ‘the pressures for conformism are heightened in the field of security studies when governments have a very real interest in marginalizing dissent.’¹⁶⁹ To challenge the reduction of politics and the closure of the political at the behest of modern security politics is to challenge the line-drawing depoliticisation and violence of sovereign power. It is to render problematic and contingent what has been posited as accomplished and, therefore, necessary. The will to security, and its problematic and contested foundations, shelter us from the unbearable excess of community, and it is with a radically different approach to the stubborn foundations of international relations thought that we can successfully unmask and challenge this.

A number of the themes motivating a critique of modern security politics also act to expose the problems posed by traditional metaphysics within modern Western political thought. Hobbes has placed the problem of the *conservatio vitae* at the centre

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p.138

¹⁶⁹ Wyn Jones, *Security, Strategy and Critical Theory*, p.162

of political thought, and it is in exploring modern thought and practice of security that we can see it constituting by far its most prevalent dimension and foreclosing any possibility of a constitutive power that is not sovereign power. Sovereignty is seen to be the common sense solution to managing the aleatory element of death, but is also revealed as the not-being-in-common of individuals and as the political form of their desocialisation. Along with reducing international political thought and practice to the katechontic and endless war of securitisation, it has rendered the self-preservation of life as the modern problem and driving force of international relations. It is only with a rejection of immunitary logics, a cogent reassertion of relationality and of the aleatory element of life and death, and an approach which grasps the necessity of contingency and encounter, that we can hope for politics to be something other than the possibility or the instrument for keeping life alive.

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