On the Relationship between Vulnerability and Sovereignty in Québécois Settler Self-Determination and the Shift to a Relational Conception of the Self as Treaty Partner

by

Joëlle Alice Michaud-Ouellet
Master of Arts, University of Victoria, 2009
Bachelor of Arts, Laval University, 2006

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Supervisory Committee

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Doctor James Tully, Department of Political Science
Co-Supervisor

Doctor Michael Asch, Department of Political Science
Co-Supervisor

Doctor John Borrows, Faculty of Law
Outside Member

Abstract

The dissertation studies the relationship between Québécois and Indigenous peoples with regards to two different approaches to self-determination. It offers a critique of sovereignty-based self-determination in the form of the nation-state – a hegemonic model throughout the world and within Québécois political imagination – by shining light on the co-constitutive relationship between vulnerability and sovereignty, tracing the origins of their conceptual association in the work of Hobbes. The dissertation argues that, comparatively, by asserting the priority of relationality over individuality, the work of Marcel Mauss contributes to a *relational* theory of self-determination. By positing togetherness, relationality, reciprocity, and difference as forming the most basic reality of politics, Maussian *gifting* offers new perspectives on the question of vulnerability in the context of intercultural relations. Finally, through a study of the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy, the dissertation argues for re-envisioning Québécois self-determination through the role of treaty partner and honouring the gift of hospitality contained in the early treaties and alliances of peace and friendship with Indigenous peoples.

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Acknowledgments

This dissertation is about acknowledging the importance of gifts and gifting in shaping who we are. I begin by acknowledging and expressing respect and gratitude for the Lkwungen-speaking peoples on whose territory the University of Victoria is located and the Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continues to this day. I came from Québec to study at UVic, and in all sorts of ways I still belong there, but on this land I was given the chance to critically reflect on what it means to have self-determination and responsibility as Québécoise, settler, and treaty partner. I express gratitude for the gifts received from my supervisors Doctors James Tully and Michael Asch. Without their guidance and patience over the years, this doctoral research would not have been possible. I am particularly grateful for their unique perspectives on intercultural relations applied to settler/Indigenous relations; their teachings will be forever with me. I thank Doctor John Borrows for taking the time to review this work and for his kind and generous comments. I am also grateful for the support of a number of colleagues over the years, Simon Labrecque, Renée McBeth Beausoleil, Kelly Aguirre, Danielle Taschereau-Mamers, Marta Bashovski, and Tim Smith.

Introduction

This dissertation aims at offering a critique of the hegemonic approach to theorizing self-determination and its articulation around the notion of sovereignty. It also aims at making a contribution towards reinterpreting self-determination along relational grounds. Approaching self-determination from a relational perspective allows for critically engaging the theoretical foundations that form the basis of the dominant understanding of self-determination *as/through* sovereignty and its implications for the way people(s) relate to each other and the world. Self-determination is currently almost exclusively theorized and enacted through the logic of sovereignty – a logic that operates through different modes of closure, objectification, and inclusion/exclusion, with the purpose of resisting the effects and affects that ensue from our need to be in relations with that which is different. I argue for moving away from this logic and embracing an understanding of self-determination that accounts for our deeply relational and interdependent human condition.

I apply this reflection to the context of Québécois/Indigenous relations, with the hope of contributing to the transformation of the current colonial state of affairs and renewal of treaty relationships based on respect, reciprocity, and equality in differences. The dissertation is written primarily for a non-indigenous audience, since it has Québécois settler self-determination as its main object. Indeed, analyzing the implications of the notion of sovereignty for self-determination poses *settler* movements of self-determination and the state form as prime targets of my critique. Using Québec as an example, my goal is to contribute to an in-depth problematization of the dominant terms of state-based nationalism, as expressed in different assumptions, discourses, and practices of sovereignty in relation to Indigenous populations and

the land. Decolonizing Québécois self-determination is the ultimate ideal guiding this project. I argue that in order to do this, we must first confront the inherently colonial quality of sovereignty-based self-determination, and second, tackle the question of our self-determination in conjunction with the one of our role as treaty partners. The issue of Québécois self-determination is inseparable from the question of what it means to be honourable treaty partners. I do not mean to suggest that the two issues of self-determination and treaty partnership are one and the same, but to insist on this point that for the Québécois people they are inextricably related. As a result, the only possible source of legitimacy for settler self-determination, whether Québécois or other, is to be found in treaty politics.

My decision to focus on the case of Québec is motivated by a few different reasons. The first and most important one is found in the basic fact that I was born and raised in Québec. I am one of those non-indigenous settlers directly concerned with Québec self-determination. I take at heart the survival and flourishing of Québécois culture and language under conditions of self-rule, and I feel a strong attachment and responsibility towards the future of Québec as a self-determined society. For me, this comes with an equally important responsibility to contribute to decolonizing the terms of Québec self-determination. There is no escape from the fact that Québec is a settler society and we have a responsibility to address this problem directly and openly, just like any other settler society. I hope my dissertation offers a contribution in this sense.

My second reason for wanting to critically interrogate the theoretical foundations of Québec self-determination is that I believe this specific case offers a rich context for reflecting on the issue of self-determination in colonial context. Québécois are in this dual position of forming a minority in relation to the rest of Canada and a majority in control of a settler state in

relation to Indigenous peoples living on the territory known as Québec. As a linguistic and cultural minority within the Canadian federation, Québec has seen different movements and expressions of self-determination aimed at resisting assimilation and affirming a right to self-rule. Indigenous peoples too have always resisted their assimilation into the Canadian state. They too, over and over since contact, have affirmed the specificity of their ways of life and their *sui generis* right to govern themselves. Yet, beyond apparent similarities, this dissertation is based on the view that Québec's hegemonic approach to self-determination generally depends on deploying onto Indigenous peoples the corollaries of modern sovereignty that form the basis of Canadian sovereignty. Thus, it effectively reproduces the very oppressive logic it seeks to resist. This is especially the case since the Quiet Revolution.

Québec is not a sovereign state under international law. Regardless, its juridical and political institutions, supported by capitalist structures of accumulation based on land occupation and extraction are comparable to the ones of full-status sovereign states. This apparatus and its reliance on sovereignty were modernized, solidified, and further legitimized as a result of the Quiet Revolution. The Quiet Revolution is commonly interpreted in the literature on Québec nationalism as a turning point in the history of the province. This turning point is said to mark the passage from a cultural to a political definition of the nation. There are reasons to doubt the reality is as simple as this categorization suggests and recent scholarship seems to be moving away from this strict binary. One thing for sure, Québec's collective sense of self is based on an alliance between three things: a national cultural identity based on the French language and a collective history (among other things), modern state institutions, and conceiving the land as a legally enclosed territorial unit. It is on the basis of these criteria that the Québécois people forms a majority. In Québec, like in the rest of Canada, this politico-legal apparatus where a people, a

territory and state institutions are bound by the logic of sovereignty allows for the constant (re)production of a typically statist relationship to what it means to be Québécois and colonialist relationship to Indigenous peoples. The settler majority defines itself through its sovereign control over the territory and state apparatus, and Indigenous peoples who have owned and inhabited this land for immemorial times are pushed to the margins.

This politico-legal context seems complicated by the fact that Québec is a place where the terms, means, and ends of self-determination are always openly debated. Québec is a society in which different views about self-determination conflict to create an ongoing and agonistic conversation about what it means to be Québécois. This calls for a clarification: the focus of my critique of self-determination as/through sovereignty is not limited to the branch of the nationalist movement that is explicitly sovereigntist in the sense of advocating for the secession of Québec from the rest of Canada and the creation of a new modern state. Québec is an interesting case for reflecting on the problems inherent to framing self-determination as/through sovereignty, not only because of its now declining sovereigntist movement, but because of the broader conversations and reflections that this movement has elicited over the years and to this day. The ongoing conversation offers to see what is so deeply problematic about modern sovereignty as a framework for self-determination, especially in relation to Indigenous self-determination and the land question. More precisely, this agonistic dialogue reveals of a strong consensus over the primacy of state sovereignty and the principle of territorial integrity. If there can *never* be a consensus over *anything else* related to the terms of Québécois self-determination, there is always at least a consensus over these two notions. This, of course, is not unique to Québec. To interrogate the limits of Québec nationalism as a movement of self-determination is

to interrogate the limits of the nation-state as the unit and basis of self-determination more generally.

The third reason for my focus on the relationship between Québécois and Indigenous self-determination has to do with our past experiences of cooperation. I refer more particularly to the alliances of peace and friendship that French settlers entered into at a time when they recognized that the Indigenous nations they encountered were independent political communities. Before European domination was established, the geo-political reality of the so-called New World made our ancestors entered into treaty relationships as defined through Indigenous diplomacy.[1] These past experiences are not in themselves a guaranty of the possibility of transforming a colonial relationship into a post-colonial one. The contrary gets proven everyday, in Québec and in the rest of Canada, as settlers break their treaty obligations and continuously fall short of their responsibility to be reliable and honourable treaty partners. Yet, revisiting the meaning of treaty making has the potential of opening up new perspectives for critically reflecting on Québécois self-determination. The hope is that a new relational understanding of Québécois self-determination may develop.

But the transformation of the colonial state of affairs in Québec can never take place without the Québécois letting go of their aspiration to become an invulnerable sovereign political subject and abandoning practices and discourses aimed at the consolidation of sovereignty. This requires reimagining ourselves and what it means to be self-determined, because decolonization is, among other things, a matter of settler self-determination. As Rachel Flowers argues, as "settler privilege is the basis for injustice and oppression of Indigenous peoples […] the labor of

[1] See for example Mathieu d'Avignon and Camil Girard, *A-t-on oublié que jadis nous étions « frères » ? Alliances fondatrices et reconnaissance des peuples autochtones dans l'histoire du Québec* (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2009) ; Gilles Havard, *La grande paix de Montréal de 1701: Les voies de la diplomatie franco-amérindienne* (Montréal : Recherches amérindiennes au Québec, 1992).

settlers should be to imagine alternative ways to be in relation with Indigenous peoples."[2] One place to start, I argue, is by embracing treaty politics and the historical treaties as not only the key to eventual political legitimacy for Québécois self-determination, but as a way of cultivating a different relationship to the self in relation to others and the world. In other words, building new relationships with Indigenous communities will only be made possible by embracing a different notion of self. Revisiting the meaning of past experiences of cooperation between Indigenous peoples and settlers through treaty can help us get there. It can also teach us how to built relationships that are non-authoritative and non-hierarchical with different peoples and the broader living world.

Defining Self-Determination

Conceiving self-determination as/through sovereignty belongs to a tradition within modern Western political thought that tends to reify and fetishize autonomy above relationality. This is the thesis defended by Tzvetan Todorov in his book *Life in Common*, in which he traces in different Western schools of thought an inclination to downplay, obfuscate, or deny the positive and fundamental role played by relationality in the construction of the self.[3] In doing so, he shows how the philosophico-political canon is characterized by a strong tendency to presuppose the wholeness and self-sufficiency of the political agent.[4] In this dissertation, I take the premise of the existence of a bounded self prior to its entering in relations with other bounded selves as a defining factor of modernity as a specific political imaginary. I argue that this notion has become hegemonic in the way we think about self-determination.

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[2] Rachel Flowers, "Refusal to Forgive: Indigenous Women's Love and Rage," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 4, no.2 (2015): 34.
[3] Tzvetan Todorov, *Life in common: an essay in general anthropology*, trans. Katherine Golsan and Lucy Golsan (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 2001).
[4] Tzvetan Todorov, *Life in common.*

One explanation for this is found in the strong association modern Western political thought establishes between autonomy, certainty, order, and security. This association of ideas started with Thomas Hobbes; Kant, however, is the philosopher who gave it its contemporary expression by couching it in the language of responsibility. According to Kant, to be a self-determined political subject means exercising free will. This is how one can be recognized as an autonomous agent responsible for its actions. Self-determination understood in those terms is also for Kant the highest achievement of political maturity.[5] The assumption behind this perspective is that, by rendering the chain of responsibility uncertain, relationality is perceived as a threat to political order and security, rather than a social reality within which the possibilities for self-determination and responsibility unfold. As a political project, creating conditions of autonomy, certainty, order, and security in self-determination requires that alterity be eliminated, managed, or kept at a distance.

The understanding of self-determination that forms the premise of this dissertation is of a different nature. In my work, self-determination is understood as a process made of the interaction of different interdependent phenomena: identification, self-awareness, belonging, and meaning construction. These phenomena intersect to create conditions of possibility for engaged and responsible political action. In the context of this dissertation, self-determination is also conceptualized as happening at the point of tension where our aspirations to be independent meet our inescapable need to be in relations. More precisely, self-determination is here conceived as a process by which we become receptive to and act on the political possibilities offered by the tension between these two poles – our need for independence and our need to be in relations with others and what makes them other to us – their difference.

[5] Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment," in H. S. Reiss, ed., *Kant Political Writings*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 54.

This relational approach to self-determination is premised on seeing the world as being constituted of a multitude of relations of interdependence among which humans are situated and through which they are constituted. My dissertation proceeds from the idea that there is no "self" existing prior to its relations with "others". It is always *self and others in relations*.[6] Thus, I understand self-determination as an active and ongoing process that is by definition open-ended. The outcome of this process can never be prefigured or taken for granted, because it occurs through interactions with what-is-different-from-self. Self-determination has more to do with how we interact with the world around and how we come to exist in relation with it, than it does with the self *per se*. Consequently, I argue that the ideal of sovereignty must be approached and understood through its relationship with vulnerability.

Understanding the self through a relational paradigm that presents vulnerability as part of the human condition troubles and resists modern assumptions about self-determination. In this sense, it would be misguided to assume that the discussion presented in this dissertation only applies to situations that are communal. Interrogating the theoretical foundations of the dominant conception of self-determination as/through sovereignty and reflecting on alternative possibilities offered by a relational approach serve to shine light on how, even at the scale of a single human being, a self is never an individual the way political modernity presupposes individuality. Conceiving self-determination as a relational process blurs the lines of demarcation between personal and collective self-determination. From this perspective, trying to tell the two apart (even only for the purpose of a theoretical discussion aimed at clarifying the concept of self-determination) is to miss the point on how mutually constitutive and interdependent they are. To refuse connecting self-determination to sovereignty is to reject the idea that there might be a

[6] Michael Asch, "Les structures élémentaires de la parenté et la pensée politique occidentale," *Les Temps Modernes* 3, no. 628 (2004): 202.

definitive "content" and a given "unit" for self-determination. It is also to reject individualization as the condition of possibility for self-determination. Additionally, rethinking self-determination as conditioned by relationality also leads to the delegitimization of conceptions of the political community that are hierarchical and authoritative. This may seems counter intuitive to most non-Indigenous people(s), as the interdependency found in relationality is traditionally equated with vulnerability, a condition to which self-determination is supposed to be a solution according to modern Western political thought. As L.M. Findlay argues in his foreword to Marie Battiste's book *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*,

> Unfortunately, far too many non-Aboriginals have been educated to see dependency as an insult or an embarrassment or something to be managed hierarchically within the ultra-competitive structures of a corporate or government team. We need to *learn,* then, that not all our limits are there to be transcended. We need to *learn* that much more in life is inevitable than death and taxes. And this *learning* may best occur in and beyond institutions directed by a new politics of difference and indigenized understanding of sustainability.[7]

Phenomena of identification, self-awareness, belonging, and meaning construction do not happen out of thin air. The question of *what* makes people come together and engage in practices of self-determination remains. But there is no universal or definitive answer to this question. People(s)' motivations for thinking of themselves as self-determined vary greatly and self-determination must be assessed in context. My research being primarily oriented towards exploring the issue of self-determination in the context of relations between Indigenous and Québécois peoples, it calls for paying close attention to the combined effect of national and cultural identity. Each groups has purposely claimed being self-determined on the basis of forming an independent nation and as a way to protect and promote their culture. There are of course important differences in the manner they respectively conceive the connection between

[7] L. M. Finlay, "Foreword," in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* ed. Marie Battiste (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), xiii.

self-determination, national politics, and cultural identity (as well as important internal differences within each group). For example, Québécois put a great emphasis on the importance of keeping the French language alive as a vehicle for self-determination, while Indigenous peoples are concerned with maintaining a relation to the land. Nevertheless, what these differences point to is a shared concern for a national culture being the source of self-determination and for self-determination being the condition for the survival and expression of a national culture.

The relational understanding of self-determination presented in this dissertation belongs to a tradition that has had only limited influence within the field of modern Western political thought. It is nonetheless important because it stands as a counter influence to the hegemony of individualism. Authors from this tradition share this view that the self exists only insofar as it is brought about through relationality. Its existence is dependent on a pre-existing relational condition. Within the context of modern Western political thought, the work of Martin Buber is groundbreaking in that sense. After him came Mauss (whose work I will explore in more details in chapter four), Lévinas, Kropotkin, Heidegger, Levi-Strauss, Foucault, and Todorov to name only some of the most influential of them. Additionally, many feminist authors have also greatly contributed to our understanding of the implications, limitations, and responsibilities that unfold from a relational conception of the self. By shining light on the ways in which relations of power and authority operate to place women in positions of subordination and exploitation, feminists provide all of us with theoretical tools for understanding how political agency is to a great extent a product of social norms and interdependency.[8] While this collection of works is very diverse and does not constitute a homogeneous field strictly speaking, they present commonalities

[8] For a complete discussion of feminist perspectives on the relationship between relationality and autonomy, see Natalie Stoljar, "Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. May 2, 2013. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-autonomy/#RelAut

around the issue of human relationality and together contribute to a more accurate understanding of human self-determination.

The relational approach to self-determination is also well alive within Indigenous political thought, where, unlike in modern Western political thought, it is actually dominant compared to the non-relational or individualistic perspective. Indeed, many Indigenous authors insist on this very point – that the importance given to interconnectedness within Indigenous worldviews and epistemologies constitutes a defining difference compared to modern Western ones.[9] Moreover, there is a growing field of Indigenous authors working towards demonstrating how the relational paradigms that permeate through Indigenous worldviews bear legal and political significance for Indigenous communities and humanity more generally. Among them are John Borrows, Kiera Ladner, Taiaiake Alfred, Audra Simpson, Leanne Simpson, Rauna Kuokkanen, and Val Napoleon. As Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark argue, this work on Indigenous relational perspectives is not merely theoretical, and it is accompanied by a growing awareness of the need for "political strategies that are grounded upon the resurgence of a relational way of being."[10] One of those political strategies revolves around treaties as they are conceived from an Indigenous perspective and the possibilities they bear for transforming relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Starblanket and Stark further explain that "collectively, this renewed attentiveness to relationship represents a resurgence of forms of political organizing that are grounded upon relationships to creation, to one another, and to future generations."[11]

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[9] Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden: Fulcrum, 1994); Marie Battiste, (ed.), Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision (Vancouver: University of Vancouver Press, 2000).
[10] Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Towards a Relational Paradigm − Four Points for Consideration: Knowledge, Gender, Land, and Modernity," in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, ed. Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 176.
[11] Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Towards a Relational Paradigm," 177.

The aim of this dissertation is to draw from both traditions in order to reimagine self-determination from a relational perspective. As Starblanket and Stark argue, "we need to be attentive to how asymmetrical power relationships have enabled conventional western knowledge to produce hierarchies of knowledge that too often mute modes of understanding the world as deeply relational and interconnected."[12] Québécois self-determination must be re-envisioned by confronting the reality that we are settlers and that the current approach is detrimental to Indigenous peoples and ourselves, because it goes against alternate relational ways of understanding and practicing self-determination. As an example, Starblanket and Stark cite Mishuana Goeman, who protests against the generalized tendency to only think of the land in terms of property, overlooking the "relationality of land as a "storied site of human interactions.""[13] The solution to this problem, however, cannot be as simple as "adopting" an Indigenous perspective for self-determination and applying it to ourselves. A relational conception of the self is not something that can be taken from other. There is already too much dispossession of Indigenous cultures in our history. As I argue in chapter five, the best thing settlers can do with regards to the specific question of self-determination is learning with respect and humility to reflect on how they can transform their own approach to self-determination. This implies accepting being vulnerable.

The Land Question

One crucial factor to consider in the study of the interplay of Indigenous and Québécois self-determination with regards to their respective national and cultural preoccupations is the land question. Indigenous and Québécois peoples, within the broader context of Canadian

[12] Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Towards a Relational Paradigm," 181.
[13] Mishuana Goeman, "Land as Life: Unsettling the Logics of Containment," quoted in Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Towards a Relational Paradigm," 182.

sovereignty, are engaged in a struggle for what is essential to their ability to live a self-determined life: access to the land on their own terms. In the most fundamental way, having access to the land and its natural resources forms a basic condition of possibility for self-determination, as it is the land that provides the resources necessary to sustain human life. Self-determination is to a certain extent contingent on the land in the sense that it exists as part of a certain ecological environment. As William E. Rees explains, "the human enterprise is always structurally and functionally inseparable from nature. That is, the human enterprise is a fully embedded, totally dependent subsystem of the ecosphere – people live *within* socio-ecosystems."[14]

That being said, the link between self-determination and the land goes beyond its material dimension. As Colin Scott explains,

> The stakes go beyond the simple question of resource management and individual or collective wealth. Sharing the land and its resources has to do with communities' ability to inhabit the world according to their own stories and social institutions, to deploy the knowledge and practices that sustain their relation to the land.[15]

According to both Scott and Rees, the land is more than an external neutral object over which self-determination takes place. Rather, self-determination depends on interactive and dynamic connections to the natural environment. In this sense, our relation to the land is one of the many relations that condition our self-determination. The character of this relationship, how we envision and practice it, how we envision ourselves *within* it, form an important part of the process of self-determination and influence the way we relate to others, who have their own

[14] William E. Rees, "Thinking 'Resilience,'" in *The Post Carbon Reader: Managing The 21st Century's Sustainability Crises*, eds. Reichard Heiberg and Daniel Lerch (Berkeley: Distributed by the University of California Press, 2010), 32.
[15] Colin Scott, "Le partage des ressources au Québec: perspectives et strategies autochtones," *Les Autochtones et le Québec: Des premiers contact au plan Nord*, ed. Alain Beaulieu, Stéphan Gervais and Martin Papillon (Montréal: PUM, 2013), 365. My translation.

vision of their relation to the land. Most of the tension between Indigenous peoples and the Québécois settler majority revolves around this very problem. Each group presents two different and often colliding interpretations of the meaning of the land for self-determination, and to put it plainly, the nation-state model of self-determination adopted by the Québécois is detrimental to Indigenous self-determination.

The Québécois predominantly see the land as a legal territorial unit. The portion of the land enclosed within the provincial borders is conceived as *their* territory, the "territory of Québec." They see themselves as the "people of Québec" for living within and being historically bound to this territory. In spite of endless constitutional debates on the matter, it is for the most part widely accepted that people inside and outside Québec will recognize these assertions as "facts." The sharing of sovereignty between the governments of Québec and Canada has never been simple. Yet, there is tacit consensus on the incontestability of sovereignty as the final and exclusive authority over the land. This rationale ties back to an anthropocentric stance, characteristic of modern thinking and by which humans are conceived as master of the earth.[16] This is what allows them to reign over it as sovereigns. From this vantage position, they order the world according to their needs and desire. As Jarrad Reddekop argues,

> Everywhere nature is ordered and reordered, mobilized, and reworked to suit the ends dictated by human beings and most especially in relation to rationalized notions of our 'self-interest'; it is continually reduced to exchange-value within a modern market society; the earth is torn asunder at great ecological cost for the sake of extracting the "resources" buried within.[17]

A notable Québécois example of this logic is found in the massive hydroelectric developments that took place in Northern Québec during the 1960s and 1970s and the slogan "Maîtres chez nous."

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[16] Jarrad Reddekop, "Thinking Across Worlds: Indigenous Thought, Relational Ontology, and the Politics of Nature: Or, If Only Nietzsche Could Meet A *Yachaj,*" (PhD dissertation, The University of Western Ontario, 2014), 23.
[17] Jarrad Reddekop, "Thinking Across Worlds," 38.

Indigenous peoples' understanding of the role of the land in self-determination, in my understanding, is profoundly different. To begin with, to Indigenous peoples the notion of the "land" is meant to capture a reality that is broader than the one the Québécois ascribe to the same word. When evoking the land in self-determination, Indigenous peoples generally mean to evoke the whole of the relations composing the natural environment within which they are situated *as* Indigenous peoples. For example, interpreting Philip Blake's description of the significance of the land for Dene people to the Berger Inquiry, Glen Coulthard identifies three meanings of the land: land-as-resource, land-as-identity, and land-as-relationship.[18] It is situatedness within those meanings that forms Indigenous identity and the very fabric of Indigenous self-determination. When studying the role of the land in Indigenous self-determination, it is important to keep in mind that it can never be objectified in this process to the same extent as what is the norm in modern Western political thought. Thus, as part of renewing our relationship with Indigenous peoples, Québécois need to start relating to the land with respect and humility to give reassurance that a different relationship could be possible. This only reaffirms the need to challenge the theoretical foundations to approaching self-determination as/through sovereignty.

Chapters Outline

The first chapter of this dissertation focuses on the theoretical relationship between vulnerability and the pursuit of certainty in self-determination. The chapter presents a theoretical framework that is articulated around five points, which are as many possible reasons for a person or a community to feel vulnerable as a consequence of their relational human condition. Before turning to briefly introducing the five implications of relationality that are discussed in more details in chapter one, I offer the following clarification. I do not mean to suggest that

[18] Glen Sean Coulthard, Red Skin, White Masks : Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 62-3.

relationality is in itself a universally negative condition because it is linked to human vulnerability. I argue instead that because we can never get rid of the *possibility* of relations turning into something negative, we are vulnerable. Human vulnerability originates in our necessary embeddedness in a world of relations and is therefore inherent to the issue of self-determination. In particular, chapter one debates the common idea that certainty is "an unequivocally desirable and positive state of affairs"[19] by discussing the possible implications of trying to secure an invulnerable identity. Such invulnerable identity is the end pursued in self-determination as/through sovereignty.

In the context of this dissertation, the notion of vulnerability stands for a cluster of implications pertaining to our human relational nature. More precisely, there are five implications to relationality and ways in which one can be said to be vulnerable. The first implication to our relational condition comes from the possibility of losing our attachment to others. The second one has to do with the risk of being hurt that comes with being in relations. The third implication resides in the danger of finding ourselves in relations with others who seek our partial or total assimilation for the sake of their own invulnerability. The fourth way in which humans can be said to be vulnerable refers to the ever-present part of unpredictability, which reminds us that self-determination is never total. Finally, the fifth implication could be expressed as follows: we are the way we relate to others and the living world around us. In other words, we are the way we relate to what-is-different-from-self. Self-determination certainly involves an aspect of intentionality in the sense that it is carried out of a desire to live independently, but intentionality is not all there is to self-determination. More important is the way we treat others

[19] Eva Mackey, *Unsettled Expectations: Uncertainty, Land and Settler Decolonization* (Black Point: Fernwood Publishing, 2016), 28.

and ourselves within the context of our relations. Chapter one discusses in turn each of these ways in which relationality may lead to vulnerability.

In chapter two I argue that the origins of the conceptual association between vulnerability and sovereignty are found in Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Hobbes has long been recognized as one of the most important thinkers of modern sovereignty, and in *Leviathan* sovereignty emerges as a response to the vulnerability of humans in the state of nature. Readers of Hobbes tend to focus on questions such as the social contract and obedience to the sovereign, along with the promise of security they carry. Nevertheless, I see the *Leviathan* as the work of a man who engages deeply the problem of human vulnerability. Additionally, whereas Hobbes is not readily considered a thinker of self-determination, I believe his grappling with scepticism extends beyond the conventional questions of the nature of things and ideas, having to do with the nature of the self as well. To be certain, his response to the problem of vulnerability – sovereignty – has had an unparalleled effect in shaping the hegemonic approach to self-determination. The idea that sovereignty is the only thing that can bring certainty and security to human society continues to influence our understanding of the self. This is what I aim to demonstrate in chapter two. I also argue that sovereignty fails to overcome vulnerability and create conditions of certainty and security. In the last section of the chapter, I argue that, ultimately, it does not matter for Hobbes whether or not the sovereign knows right from wrong and whether he can *actually* resolve the problem of scepticism, what matters is the appearance that he can. On the basis of this idea, I conclude the chapter by arguing that although vainglory is presented by Hobbes as to be avoided by individual citizens. He considers it to be a prerogative of the sovereign, whose projected image of invulnerability is nothing but vainglory.

Chapter three is the one in which I turn to the specific case of Québec. This chapter is divided in three sections. The first one presents the work of five nationalist authors who see the Québécois as a vulnerable people. These authors each contribute in their own way to what I consider to be a discourse of vulnerability in Québec. This discourse is rooted in the historical experience of forming a minority in the broader Anglo-Saxon North American context. The authors presented in this chapter are Lionel Groulx, Fernand Dumont, Hubert Aquin, Joseph Yvon Thériault, and Gérard Bouchard. I selected these authors because, although they do not use the language of vulnerability directly, with the exception of Bouchard, their arguments leave no doubt that they see Québec through the lens of vulnerability. Additionally, their works show that vulnerability is a sentiment that keeps reappearing in the history of Québec. Indeed, they all wrote at different points in time: from Lionel Groulx who was writing before the Second World War to Bouchard, whose book *Interculturalism* was published at the beginning of the 21st Century.

The second section presents my reading of an article written by Sylvie Vincent in 1986. In this article, Vincent presents a theoretical analysis of the "relationship" that the Québécois people entertain towards Indigenous peoples and its purpose in the context of Québec self-determination. If this so-called relationship is presented as a one-way thing, it is because this is precisely what Vincent argues; the Québécois' attitude towards Indigenous peoples is essentially self-referential and self-serving. What comes out of Vincent's analysis is the idea that, if Québécois alternate between wanting to assimilate and wanting to exclude Indigenous peoples from their national political imagination, it is because they are limited by the only two ways of dealing with difference that are available to the sovereign political subject. Moreover, for Vincent this is especially important because she claims that through their interactions with

Indigenous peoples, the Québécois teach themselves how to interact with people(s) who too are different from them. In other words, the way the Québécois people responds to the fact that Indigenous peoples are different from the majority is fundamental for the formation of its general attitude towards difference. Vincent concludes her analysis by arguing that the Québécois should let go of the ideal of certainty in the construction of the self because it leads to rigidity and hierarchy in our interactions with others. I take this as an invitation to reimagine ways of interacting with others and embrace the risk of being transformed in the process. To this day the Québécois have failed to follow Vincent's advice and continue to approach self-determination as an anti-thesis to vulnerability.

The last section of chapter three shows the practical implication of Vincent's theoretical argument. It discusses what happens to Indigenous/non-indigenous relations when the majority identifies with the nation-state model. In other words, I look at the political model that formed as a result of the Quiet Revolution and in an attempt to overcome vulnerability to see what impacts it has had on the Québécois' relations with Indigenous peoples. What does it signify that the Québécois reimagined themselves as a collective sovereign political subject in control of state-like institutions and a legal territory?

In chapter four I turn to analyzing Marcel Mauss's book *The Gift* and argue that it represents an alternative approach to self-determination. This analysis is contrary to the ones presented by Marshall Sahlins and Jacques Derrida, each of them famous in their respective academic circle. While Sahlins and Derrida's readings are undeniably very different, I argue in this chapter that they both make the same mistake of assuming that there is, at the foundation of Mauss's argument on gift exchange, a sovereign individual political subject. If we accept this notion, then the act of giving is one that takes place after the process of self-determination is

already completed. I argue instead that the very purpose of Mauss's essay is to question the possibility of atomistic self-determination and argue for a conception of the self that is deeply relational. Interpreted as such, Mauss's perspective leads to questioning the possibility of sovereignty and re-considering the relationship between self-determination and vulnerability. Principles of reciprocity and responsibility are also re-interpreted in light of the fundamental importance of gift giving.

The aim of this chapter is to introduce a Québécois settler audience to how treaties, when they are understood and practiced from an Indigenous worldview, can support an alternative relational approach to self-determination. When sustained by the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy, treaties rest on a conception of the self that is deeply relational, similar to the one found in Mauss's work on gifting. The ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy implies seeing the world as being made of countless relations in which the self is embedded. Consequently, as I argue in this chapter, Indigenous treaty philosophy opens the realm of possibilities when it comes to self-determine in a diverse, ever-changing world in which we live in interdependency. The argument presented in this chapter is articulated around the idea that Indigenous treaty philosophy has pedagogical value for transforming settlers' approach to self-determination. More precisely, the implications of treaty for Québécois self-determination and the idea of an obligation to learn about the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy are analyzed in light of notions of the gift, reciprocity, and responsibility.

Chapter One: Vulnerability

Introduction

Up until recently, vulnerability as a political concept was only rarely considered worthy of interest by political thinkers, and for the most part, the field of modern Western political thought remains silent on this reality that humans are vulnerable to all sort of things and for all sort of reasons. On the contrary, the predominance of the concept of modern sovereignty over the field, often in the form of a promise that certainty and security are achievable in the world, no longer seems to require demonstration. And the centrality of the self-bounded, autonomous and willing subject (either in the form of a human person or a state) as a corollary to sovereignty cannot be overstated. Modern Western political thought presupposes and perpetuates the possibility of an integral sovereign self, prior to its entering in relations with other selves. What is less readily recognized, however, is how vulnerability and sovereignty are co-constitutive of one another.

In the first section, this chapter aims to show how the figure of the sovereign subject that is at the heart of modern Western political thought and regulates our understanding of self-determination is the result of an attempt to override the political significance of vulnerability through the dismissal of relationality. It does so by presenting an epistemological theoretical framework in five points, each of them a consequence of the fact that humans are deeply relational beings, who do not own an existence prior to their social constitution. Far from eliminating the problem of vulnerability, self-determination as/through sovereignty further cultivates it.

The first implication to our relational condition comes from the possibility of losing our attachment to others. The second one has to do with the risk of being hurt. The third implication resides in the danger of finding ourselves in relations with others who seek our partial or total

assimilation, often to foster their own sentiment of invulnerability. The fourth manner in which humans can be said to be vulnerable refers to the ever-present unpredictability of life, which reminds us that self-determination is never total. Finally, the fifth implication could be expressed as follows: we are the way we relate to others and the world around us. In other words, we are the way we relate to what-is-different-from-self. Self-determination certainly involves a certain aspect of intentionality to the extent that it is carried out of a desire to live independently, but intentionality is not all there is to self-determination and the how we treat others and ourselves in relation to them seems a more important factor.

Before turning to explaining in greater detail each of the five implications listed previously and defining further what the notion of vulnerability stands for in the context of this dissertation, I offer two remarks. Those are made necessary because vulnerability is here observed and theorized in context of gross power imbalance, namely, the colonial relationship between Indigenous and Québécois peoples.

The emergence of vulnerability as a political concept

In the last decade or so the notion of vulnerability as a concept has gained popularity in some academic circles. This emerging concern regarding the significance of vulnerability in human affairs is not strictly limited to the discipline of political thought. It is rather through the development of an interdisciplinary body of literature and dialogue that the problem of vulnerability has become an object of study. From disciplines as varied as environmental studies,[20] feminist theory,[21] sociology,[22] critical human geography,[23] or legal studies[24] scholars

[20] See for example, Sarah Dooling and Gregory Simons, eds., *Cities, Nature and Development: The Politics and Production of Urban Vulnerabilities* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012).
[21] See for example, Judith Butler, *Precarious Life* (London: Verso, 2006); Erinn C. Gilson, "Vulnerability, Ignorance, and Oppression," *Hypatia: a journal of feminist philosophy* 26, no. 2 (2011): 308-332; Erinn C. Gilson, *The Ethics of Vulnerability: A Feminist ANalysis of Social Life and Practice* (New York : Routledge, 2014);

have started thinking through the problem of vulnerability, pointing to its value as a concept for adequately assessing the reality of the living.

To most people, the word 'vulnerability' evokes a state of fragility, insecurity, or powerlessness. Vulnerability is often said to be the quality of children and women. People living with a disability, sickness, or in a state of poverty are also commonly cited as vulnerable populations. Vulnerable subjects are said to be 'at risk.' Barry Hoffmaster summarizes common understandings of the vulnerable subject as "susceptible to something bad."[25] By extension, those common understandings converge in leaving the impression that the vulnerable one is in need of a benefactor, caretaker, or some sort of remedy. Seen in this light, vulnerability is an attribute of a particular person or group. The main problem with common understandings of vulnerability is that they are predominantly formulated in reference to the norm of *in*vulnerability, thus reaffirming the centrality of the self-bounded, integral, individual sovereign subject.

Those common definitions are often influential of the ways in which vulnerability is being taken on in academic literature. [26] While this tendency remains strong, it can be argued that the emerging interdisciplinary body of work on vulnerability aims at deepening our appreciation of it as a shared human condition. The work of Judith Butler, in particular her book *Precarious Life,* originally published in 2004, is ground breaking in that regard. Located at the margins of political thought and feminist and gender studies, Butler's work has opened up new ways of

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Penelope Deutscher, "Vulnerability and Metamorphosis," *Differences : A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 16, no. 2 (2005): 61-87.

[22] See for example, Bryan S. Turner, *Vulnerability and Human Rights* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

[23] See for example, Nancy Ettlinger, "Precarity Unbound," *Alternatives* 32 (2007): 319-340.

[24] See for example, Martha Albertson Fineman and Ana Grear, *Vulnerability: Reflections on a New Ethical Foundation for Law and Politics* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013).

[25] Barry Hoffmaster, "What Does Vulnerability Mean?" *Hartings Centre Report* 36, no. 2 (2006): 38.

[26] For example, according to Dooling and Simons, in the fields of disaster management, food and water security, and climate change, there is a consensus around conceptualizing vulnerability as the "degree to which a system is susceptible or responsive to the adverse effects of shocks and stresses." In Sarah Dooling and Gregory Simons, eds., *Cities, Nature and Development.*

thinking about the political significance of vulnerability, thus offering a renewed questioning of the ontological possibility of a transcendental subject as the agent of politics. This is good news, but it calls for the careful consideration of two problems.

Firstly, vulnerability is here understood as a universal or existential condition, as well as an actual or material reality. The argument presented in this dissertation presupposes seeing passed immediate and material signs of vulnerability to engage the possibility that all people(s) are vulnerable. Conceptualizing vulnerability in such a manner should allow for questioning, rather than reifying, relationships that thrive on exploiting the vulnerability of particular persons or groups. The distinction is, of course, an artificial one; vulnerability is always at once existential *and* material. Nevertheless, and while acknowledging the possibility of reifying a distinction that is artificial, I believe it is epistemologically useful to insist on the dual character of human vulnerability. As Nancy Ettlinger explains, "[p]recarity is engendered by a wide range of processes and, as it extends across space and time and also materializes (differently) in social, economic, political, and cultural spheres, it is an enduring feature of the human condition."[27] This first point should become clearer when juxtaposed with the second point I wish to make regarding to the notion of vulnerability.

Secondly, it is important to keep in mind that we are not equally vulnerable. While my argument is premised on the idea of a shared human condition found in relationality and its corollary of vulnerability, I do not mean to suggest that the five implications listed above bear the same weight on everyone. It is important to not lose sight of the relative vulnerability resulting from specific political, social, and economic conditions people find themselves in and which can exacerbate the effects of the basic relational condition we all share. There are material life conditions and contexts that make humans especially vulnerable. Colonialism is one of those

[27] Nancy Ettlinger, "Precarity Unbound," *Alternatives* 32 (2007): 324.

contexts.

Now bringing the two points together. When vulnerability is revealed and exposed through specific and actual life conditions, trying to see past those conditions to engage the possibility of vulnerability being an existential problem can appear trivial at best. Colonialism is a type of relation that exacerbates Indigenous peoples' basic vulnerability, while Québécois settlers live their life in a situation of privilege. Yet, despite what the sheer imbalance of power and settler privilege suggest, there is no life outside relationality and vulnerability always remains a possibility. Thus, even if the distinction between existential and actual vulnerability is artificial, insisting on the idea that vulnerability extends beyond material life conditions allows for a better appreciation of the depth of our relational condition. Moreover, I argue that this is one of the very benefits of colonialism to settlers that it provides them with the means of denial by which it becomes possible to pretend to have overcome vulnerability, while and through exploiting the vulnerability of Indigenous populations. A primary example of this is found in the alignment of self-determination with notions of state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and extractivism, which is evidently detrimental to Indigenous peoples' self-determination.

I argue that from the perspective of a deeply relational understanding of self-determination, the logic of sovereignty leads to denial regarding the impossibility of overcoming human vulnerability. The invulnerability that settlers are seeking with regards to the conditions of their own self-determination lies on an illusion: the possibility of escaping relationality.

Alternatively, framing vulnerability as an existential problem calls for only limited responsibility to act on the actual conditions of our existence if it obfuscates the *relative* character of vulnerability and its contingency on contextualized relations of power. A question that requires attention is whether or not this responsibility falls equally on everyone. Inequality in the

distribution of vulnerability tells us the answer is no. Here a distinction between *responsibility* and *accountability* presented by Rita Dhamoon proves useful.[28] Dhamoon presents responsibility as "an infinite obligation that goes beyond one's intention and private obligations."[29] I interpret this to mean that everybody, on the basis of a shared relational and vulnerable condition, has a responsibility to not abuse or exacerbate each other's *specific* vulnerability. By extension, a responsibility falls on all of us to tend to the relations we find ourselves embedded in. Accountability, however, is defined by Dhamoon as falling unto people on the basis of their intention and to the measure of their impact on others. In other words, people who are in such a privileged position that they can enjoy the illusion of a more or less invulnerable sense of self must be held accountable for how this privilege was constructed and how it affects other people. In subsequent chapters, I focus on the notion of responsibility (and reciprocity), with the hope that it eventually leads settlers to become more accountable.

Moreover, a critical analysis of the theoretical foundations of the dominant approach to self-determination must not lose sight of one of the main reasons why people come to articulate self-awareness and identity through claims of self-determination. As I mentioned above, over the last century, the notion self-determination has emerged as a framework for the emancipation and empowerment of particularly vulnerable populations. With that in mind, it is important to make sure that insisting on the significance of vulnerability for issues of self-determination leads to a greater awareness of a universal interdependency and not to the crystallization of relations of dependency. Thus, I turn to the five implications to relationality introduced previously, as I understand the idea of sovereignty to have been developed in direct response to them.

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[28] Rita Dhamoon, *Identity/Difference Politics: How Difference Is Produced, and Why It Matters* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 14.
[29] Rita Dhamoon, *Identity/Difference Politics*, 14.

The first and most basic way in which human beings are vulnerable due to their deeply relational condition is through the fear of losing their attachments to others. We exist in a state of interdependency that renders claims of self-sufficiency futile and the perspective of abandonment scary. The idea of a "vulnerability to loss"[30] is one put forth by Butler. For Butler, the idea of a universally shared vulnerability and the inescapability of relationality are opportunities for reflecting on the conduct of politics.

In *Precarious Life* Butler presents vulnerability as a problem that "one cannot will away without ceasing to be human."[31] Butler further explains this point when she offers the following and insightful description of what awaits the self, if its ties to others are lost.

> When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do. At one level, I think I have lost "you" only to discover that "I" have gone missing as well. At another level, perhaps what I have lost "in" you, that for which I have no ready vocabulary, is a relationality that is composed neither exclusively of myself nor you, but is to be conceived as the tie by which those terms are differentiated and related.[32]

Butler's description is interesting because it focuses our attention on the need for ties by which we find ourselves situated in webs of relations and attachments. Focusing on a need for relationality, as opposed to a need for specific people allows us to appreciate how self and others are ever embedded in webs of interdependency that trouble the very possibility of their individuality. Those relations are multiple and criss-crossing. They are not to be necessarily understood along lines of mutuality. Among all the relations that make us who we are, some are more meaningful than others. They are presumably the ones we are concerned not to lose. But to limit our understanding of the need for others to the fear of losing our attachment to loved ones is to miss on the depth of the issue. As Butler explains, it is the "tie" for which we "have no ready

[30] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life* (London: Verso, 2006), 19.
[31] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, xiv.
[32] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, 22.

vocabulary" and the fear of losing it that bears significance. This focus brings us to see how we also depend on relations that are negative or harmful, often just as much as we do on the ones that are positive and nurturing. This is because life outside of relationality is impossible and that self-sufficiency is a myth. In my mind, it is this impossibility that we perceive and which explains the fear of losing our ties to others.

This leads me to discuss the second implication to relationality: a life lived in relation bears the possibility of being hurt. Through our need to be in relations with others we reveal and expose ourselves, sometimes for the best, but always with the possibility for being hurt lying in the background. My characterization of this second implication is also guided by Butler's work on vulnerability. Butler explores the question of human vulnerability through the idea of the precariousness of life, as revealed by the horrors of war. In line with her previous work on the social character of the body, Butler's primary concern in theorizing vulnerability is with the injurability of the person.

Butler's perspective on the problem of injurability seeks to provoke a reflection that begins with the realization and acceptance that an invulnerable life is impossible. She explains, "[l]oss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure."[33] From this perspective, there is no ruling out of the possibility of being hurt by relations.

More precisely, Butler draws attention to how vain efforts to exit relationality amount in the end to deploying strategies directed at affecting the only thing we can actually impact: the differential distribution of vulnerability among people.[34] In other words, if some people ever

[33] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, 20.
[34] Judith Butler, *Frames of War* (London: Verso, 2010), xvii.

come to feel invulnerable, it is only through their ability to mobilize strategies aimed at minimizing their own exposure while maximizing the one of others. Butler explains, "the generalized condition or precariousness that establishes a certain equality of exposure is denied in favor of a differential distribution of precarity."[35] Reflecting, for example, on the Israeli colonial context and the recourse to military strategies against Palestinian civilians, Butler explains how these strategies draw on and perpetuate the "denial of the colonizer's precariousness in the name of invulnerable self-defense."[36] This is part of her broader claim that, in order to be apprehended as precarious and vulnerable at all, a specific life must first be framed as such, that is, as a grievable life.[37] Through this discussion, Butler offers a great contribution toward replacing the problem of our exposure to others at the centre of our understanding of politics.

Thus, in both *Precarious Life* and *Frames of War*, Butler explores what form "political reflection and deliberation ought to take if we take injurability and aggression as two points of departure for political life."[38] According to Butler, injurability leads to "certain clear political demands and principles,"[39] that are themselves guided by an awareness of the interdependency of all beings. Accordingly, Butler thinks that coming to terms with the impossibility of eliminating once and for all the risk of being hurt carries the potential for greater responsiveness to the vulnerability of others. For Butler this is what forms the background against which it becomes possible to take position and act in the sense of global justice and ethics. Because human lives are fragile and subject to injury and death, humans have a responsibility to each other and the world.

[35] Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, xxv.
[36] Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, xxv.
[37] Judith Butler, *Frames of War*.
[38] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, xii.
[39] Judith Butler, *Frames of War,* xxv.

Before turning to discussing the third implication to relationality and exploring further the issue of vulnerability, I would like to offer a critical remark on Butler's proposition that injurability and aggression constitute meaningful points of departure for thinking about politics. Indeed, this is not without problems, especially in the context of a discussion on the issue of self-determination. Despite Butler's stated intentions of shining light on a reality that affects us all, I argue that her work leaves at times the impression that it reifies the injurability of certain people (the ones who are so obviously vulnerable) for the sake of other people coming to terms with the impossibility of achieving self-protection. For Butler, the experience of witnessing and apprehending the "precarity of others – their exposure to violence, their socially induced transience and dispensability"[40] is to become aware of our own vulnerability, as well as the one of all sentient beings. In doing so, she posits some people's actual experience of violence and exploitation as a premise to the "awakening" of others. In addition to crystallizing the differential distribution of vulnerability among different people, the reification of the injurability of the most vulnerable populations shows the problems with founding a politics of self-determination on notions such as injury and hurt.

Butler is clear that vulnerability cannot be reduced to injurability. Butler explains, "precariousness implies living socially, that is, the fact that one's life is always in some sense in the hands of the "Other". It implies exposure both to those we know, and to those we do not know; a dependency on people we know, or barely know, or know not at all. Reciprocally, it implies being impinged upon by the exposure and dependency of others, most of whom remain anonymous."[41] This complex social context, she further explains, "establishes the possibility of being subjugated and exploited […] But it also establishes the possibility of being relieved of

[40] Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, xvi.
[41] Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, 14.

suffering, of knowing justice and even love."[42] Thus, after putting a great emphasis on injurability as point of departure for thinking about politics, Butler reaffirms relationality as her main purpose.

In my own work, the idea of human exposure to others and the possibility of being hurt that comes with it follow from relationality, and I disagree with Butler's idea that injurability represents a valuable starting point for reflecting on our relations with others. If there is such a thing as a "starting point" for reflecting on politics, it is to be found in relationality. More precisely, I believe that in order to avoid the above-mentioned problem of reification, injurability and hurt should always be approached in juxtaposition with the four other implications to relationality. A holistic study of the effects of relationality on self-determination is the best way to appreciate all the nuances and possibilities it offers, including vulnerability as an aspect of human life.

The third way in which humans can be said to be vulnerable has to do with the risk of assimilation. In order to fully appreciate this third implication of relationality, it is important to recall what is at stake in our interdependency with others and the world. It goes beyond specific relations and has to do with the human need to be in relation with irreducible difference. By this I mean that our sense of self depends on being in touch with and influenced to some extent by what-is-different-from-self. It is within this notion of the transformative character of difference that lies the possibility of assimilationism.

In the most basic way, I refer to the notion of assimilation to describe the process by which differences are minimized, dismissed, or suppressed and similarities emphasized, imposed or fabricated. Assimilation happens when differences between self and other(s) collapse into sameness. Assimilationsim is when one tries to overrule the tension between the need for identity

[42] Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, 61.

and the need for difference, by objectifying difference in the pursuit of an invulnerable identity. And while my purpose here is to draw attention to the idea that the vulnerability found in relationality is a reality that affects us all, the proposition of a shared exposure to the risk of assimilation needs to be made cautiously, especially in the context of a discussion taking place against a colonial horizon. Indeed, an unequal distribution of power, more than anything else, is what determines the extent to which one is vulnerable to assimilationist pressures.

J. Milton Yinger described in 1981 the problem of assimilation as one of "boundary reduction."[43] In my mind Yinger's formulation is interesting for it exemplifies a tendency to mistake 'boundaries' as the object and criteria of assimilation, in lieu of relations of differentiation affected by power. In other words, Yinger's definition, suggests that one's sense of self depends on the drawing and maintaining of a line of demarcation between self and others. Where what distinguishes the self from others is something like a field of relations, the dominant approach to self-determination wants us to imagine a clear line of separation, thus making prevention against assimilation a matter of boundary enforcement. The vulnerability that one experiences when faced with the prospect of assimilation speaks to the human need for independence and identity. But what I want to emphasize is how the idea that the self can escape vulnerability by "shoring itself up"[44] or by building walls to keep out the influence of difference ties into a very specific modern Western political perspective on independence and identity – one that leads directly to further assimilationism.

As many have argued before me, an inevitable consequence of focusing on boundary

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[43] J. Milton Yinger, "Toward a Theory of Assimilation and Dissimilation," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4, no. 3 (July 1981): 249. In his article, Yinger carries on and offers a thoughtful theorization of the different phenomena involved in the process of assimilation (with the American society's internal diversity in mind). Without wanting to do injustice to his argument, I here limit my commentary to the basic definition of assimilation it provides because it strikes me as a clear example of a very common problem when it comes to theorizing the interaction between self and other.

[44] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, ?

enforcement as a mechanism against assimilation is the necessary reverting to assimilation for dealing with difference on the inside.[45] In this context, relations between self and what-is-different-from-self form an opposition where one's identity depends on the successful exercise of power over difference, which must be tamed or kept at a distance. Thus, in trying to resist the more or less pressing influence of difference, the modern homogeneous subject is found oscillating between two untenable positions in its relations to others: more assimilation or radical incommensurability.[46] Clearly, the idea that boundary enforcement represents a valid response to the risk of assimilation is at best inadequate as it further perpetuates the problem it claims to address.

On one level, the feeling of vulnerability in the face of assimilation speaks to a person or a group's need for maintaining a clear sense of self. On a deeper level, however, this vulnerability is revealing of the absolute necessity for difference in the world. Indeed, the idea of all differences collapsing into sameness evokes death. No identity, no life is possible without the perpetual and creative interaction of difference. In other words, assimilation can never be complete or total, as the ever-necessary presence of differences forms a real barrier against assimilationism. Ironically, it also creates a context where it is impossible to eliminate the risk that the transformative potential of difference could be arrogated for the purpose of assimilationist politics. This is why I argue we have a responsibility to live relations of differentiation with an ethical concern for how these relations are also relations of power.

The fourth facet of vulnerability has to do with the ever-remaining part of unpredictability that accompanies a relational understanding of the self. According to Ettlinger,

[45] R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/outside: international relations as political theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[46] Vassilios Paipais, "Self and Other in Critical International Theory: Assimilation, Incommensurability and the Paradox of Critique," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 1 (January 2011).

"precarity is a condition of vulnerability relative to contingency and the inability to predict."[47] As I mentioned above, self-determination is here understood as a possibility that unfolds in relations, as opposed to a status to be *achieved*. If we accept that relationality precedes the self; if we accept the necessity of difference in the world, as well as the idea that trying to objectify, domesticate, or assimilate difference is not only wrong but, ultimately, impossible; and if we accept that this social context is the only context in which self-determination is possible; then we have to come to terms with self-determination being, to some extent, an open-ended process, the outcome of which can never be entirely prefigured.

More specifically, as a process of meaning construction that is subject to the unpredictability of relationality, self-determination can never be considered total. To express this point differently, the complexity and richness of a life lived in relations are such that it is unrealistic to imagine that a movement of self-determination could ever account for and contain *all* the possibilities it offers. As Butler expresses it, the possibility of the self being "interrupted by alterity"[48] is always present. In my interpretation, this notion of interruption can be either positive or negative; there is no specific content to it. The self is being so to speak "interrupted" when confronted with the occurrence of the unknown and unaccounted for.

There is another point of comparison between different theoretical approaches to self-determination: the question of their respective response to the unpredictability that is implied in the need to be in relation with difference. Is the idea of disruption considered an abnormality, in which case self-determination would indeed be considered total, or is it recognized for its creative effect on the self?

In exploring this question, I turn to a categorization by Sheldon S. Wolin, by which he

[47] Nancy Ettlinger, "Precarity Unbound," 324.
[48] Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, 14

opposes two different visions of politics, one he describes as *in*tending and the other one he describes as tending. The categories were introduced as two "theories of constitutional practice"[49] in "Tending and Intending a Constitution," written at the time of the bicentennial commemoration of the ratification of the American Constitution. More generally, Wolin uses the notions of *in*tending and tending to refer "broadly to two persistent modes of thinking about and practicing politics."[50] I use Wolin's categories as a framework for exploring the issue of unpredictability because I think they accurately speak to two possible postures towards difference. These postures are representative of the two different approaches to self-determination discussed in this dissertation. More precisely, I see the value of Wolin's distinction in that it shows the limits and problems implied in approaching politics and self-determination with a vision that intends its outcome, namely rigidity and authoritarianism.[51] This politics of *in*tending is consistent with a sovereignty-based approach to self-determination. As it is, we have grown used to the vision of *in*tending politics being dominant compared to tending politics, but this domination is not as total as it might appear.

Interestingly, turning to the common definitions of the words *in*tending and tending, as Wolin does himself, is revealing of what each of these two visions implies the issue of self-determination. The common usage of the word tending signifies "to apply oneself to looking after another."[52] In this sense, when applied to politics, it implies being guided by the same intentions as the ones guiding a person tending to a garden or the sick, to use two examples provided by Wolin. The politics of tending is focused on care. Wolin claims, "it implies active

[49] Sheldon S. Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," in *The Presence of the Past: Essays on the State and the Constitution* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 84.
[50] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 82.
[51] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 88.
[52] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 88.

care of things close at hand, not mere solicitude."[53] Alternatively, the common definition of *in*tending stresses "seeking deliberately to bring about some desired effect or purpose."[54] But Wolin also draws our attention to the meaning of the etymological root *intendere*: "to stretch forth."[55] On the basis of this definition, he sees the main objective of the politics on *in*tending to try to foresee and act onto the future as if the future could be made certain in the present. Wolin summarizes these different meanings under the idea of "straining toward the future,"[56] and argues that in it lies the main explanation behind the *in*tending vision of politics being focused on authority, where authority is exercised through control.[57]

As I interpret it, *in*tending self-determination presupposes the possibility of and strikes for achieving certainty over a given political subjectivity. In order for this to be possible, self-determination must aim for closure, as this is the only way to achieve the conditions of control by which certainty becomes possible. *The self intends itself,* and this can only be done under a controlled set of circumstances. It is not difficult to see how the inescapable and transformative obligation to be in relations with others poses problem to an *in*tending vision of self-determination.

According to Wolin, the *in*tending vision of politics relates to difference as a weakness.[58] In this sense, an *in*tending approach to self-determination speaks to a desire to control the effects of differences in our lives. Wolin explains,

> Difference [signifies] exception, anomaly, local peculiarities, and a thousand other departures from the uniformity that certain kind of power prefers. Difference rejects the notion of a single narrative history and a unifying single purpose. It favors a pluralistic

[53] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 89.
[54] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 90.
[55] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 90.
[56] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 90.
[57] Wolin argues that the politics of intending "inclines toward an authoritarian conception as the nineteenth century understood that term: one who loves the principle of authority, that is, the right to command and enforce obedience." Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 88.
[58] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 92.

> conception of history, or histories rather than history. Difference is not about a unified collective self but about the biography of a place in which different beings are trying to live together.[59]

This is a vision that is consistent with approaching self-determination through the logic of sovereignty. Or more precisely, I interpret the *in*tending vision of politics in self-determination to be dependent on the logic of sovereignty. As Wolin's insightful discussion of the problem shows, such a strain toward the future is an "effort that requires power[60]" with the expected result that the "agent intensifies, focuses, his or her powers."[61] Wolin further claims that within the *in*tending framework, "achieving objectives is understood as a problem of establishing conditions that will facilitate or smooth the exercise of power."[62] Thus, as an approach to "daily" politics, the politics of *in*tending refers to the conduct of politics through official and well-established channels of power and institutions with the hope that these will prove successful in preventing the disruptive effect of the unpredictable. Here again, self-determination depends on formalism and legality, and the state form is the highest achievement of the *in*tending approach to politics.

On the contrary, Wolin describes the politics of tending as one that "centers politics around practices,"[63] and troubles commonly held beliefs regarding the legitimacy of representative democracy. The most important difference, in my reading, lies in that a politics of tending is not one that tries to prefigure its end. Thus, it sees politics as an ongoing and open-ended process. Contrary to the authoritative formalism of the politics of *in*tending, the politics of tending depends on the active participation of its members. Accordingly, Wolin argues that a

[59] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 93.
[60] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 90.
[61] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 90.
[62] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 91.
[63] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 89.

politics of tending requires that the members of a community cultivate their skills, where skills are understood broadly as what is "required if things are to be taken care of."[64]

Again with regard to the specific problem of relational self-determination, I argue that a politics of tending carries a greater sensibility and respect for the necessity of differences in relations. In my interpretation, the politics of tending is nourished by a vision that underscore the impossibility of systematizing the conduct of politics and refuses closure and certainty as regulating norms of self-determination. Wolin argues, "proper tendance requires attentiveness to differences between beings within the same general class, whether students, patients, plants, or animals."[65] This is not to say that a politics of tending applied to self-determination needs to imply a total openness to others. Wolin claims, "tendance implies respect that is discrimination but not discriminatory."[66] Seeing politics as a practice that requires the ongoing active and skilled participation of its members for it cannot possibly be perfectly mapped out or envisioned seems better suited to deal with the vulnerability that result from the ever-remaining part of unpredictability that we owe to our relational condition.

Finally, the fifth dimension of the issue of vulnerability as it stems from a relational conception of the self could be expressed as follows: the self is how it relates to others and the living world around. To put it differently, the self is determined by the type of relations it cultivates with what-is-different-from-self. From this observation may result a certain form of vulnerability in the sense that it renders more complex our understanding of the process of self-determination by problematizing and minimizing the role of intention and will. The idea that self-determination, to a great extent, escapes intentionality is easily perceived as a contradiction. Most of us think of self-determination as a form of will-driven emancipation from exogenous

[64] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 89.
[65] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," 89.
[66] Wolin, "Tending and Intending a Constitution: Bicentennial Misgivings," ?

authority. This is central to modern conceptions of self-determination. Problematizing the centrality of intention and will also has implications for how we think about the issue of responsibility. Making the existence of the self so deeply contingent goes against a long tradition in modern Western political thought for which self-determination is primarily an endogenous process driven by will.

Since Kant's famous answer to the question, *What Is Enlightenment?*, the issue of self-determination has been generally assimilated to the exercise of individual free will. Self-determination is for Kant a matter of maturity and courage, two qualities needed in order to pursue emancipation from the guidance of others and exercising free will. Thus theorized through the notion of sovereignty, self-determination has become a pillar of modern political thought in the sense that it is understood as enabling responsible political action. Individual free will is the mark of a free responsible agent. However, free will also constitutes for Kant the *limit* of one's individual responsibility. According to Kant's deontological ethics, an individual's actions must be guided by the perfect concordance of duty and will and not by attempting to predict their consequences, which are by definition exterior to the will. According to this perspective, the ethical value of any action is solely a factor of a pre-determined intention formed on the basis of a universal principle of action: the categorical imperative. Such a perspective also implies judging self-determination in reference to a transcendence that makes it universal. The Kantian understanding of self-determination belongs to the domain of what Max Weber calls the ethics of conviction.

Weber opposes to the ethics of conviction the ethics of responsibility. The theoretical distinction between the two serves to shine light on the limitations inherent to trying to apply the former to political matters. For Weber the political is defined by the necessary recourse to

violence. Although there is room for questioning the centrality given to violence in Weber's definition of politics, the distinction he proposes between the two ethics is useful for understanding the problems that come with making free will the standard of all political actions.

For Weber, the main problem with the ethics of conviction is found in this idea that the end justifies the means. In principle, this idea should limit the scope of acceptable means of action. Indeed, any Kantian thinker would argue that the end must be good in itself (i.e. universal) and that moral ends lead to moral means of action. The applicability of this principle in practice, however, is questionable, and Weber argues, "[with] this problem of justifying the means by the ends, we see the inevitable failure of an ethics of conviction in general. That is to repudiate every action that makes use of morally suspect means, logically."[67] Because the ethics of conviction requires purity of motives, it is ill suited for guiding human actions in practice. As a result,Weber fears that the ethics of conviction may be turned unto itself and used to serve as a justification for all sort of abuse. This is especially concerning to him given his ideas on the relationship between politics and violence. Ultimately, the ethics of conviction, as a consequence, tends to reinforce the centrality of the modern sovereign political subject by allowing its intentions to be the measure of all things.

On the contrary, the ethics of responsibility requires taking in consideration the human person as a social being whose existence is always situated within a context that is social, cultural, ecological, political, historical, economic, and so on. More precisely, it evaluates the ethical value of human actions on the basis of their actual consequences in the world. The underlying idea is that human actions affect their context just as much as they are affected by it. Consequentialist rather than deontological, the ethics of responsibility allows for taking into

[67] Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *The Vocation Lectures*, ed. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004), 85.

account the effects of different actions on human vulnerability and, alternatively, the effects of human vulnerability on the determination of different human actions. Weber insists on this point: people can only be held responsible for consequences that could reasonably be predicted. Only the consequences that a reasonable agent may have been able to anticipate fall under that agent's responsibility. Nevertheless, when applied to the question of self-determination, this means that it is not a unilateral process in which one "invents" itself without consideration of others. There are ethical limits to what can be done in the pursuit of self-determination.

That being said, Weber is aware that the ethics of responsibility, no more than the ethics of conviction, is sufficient in itself, and true politics – *politics as a vocation* – exists where the two intersect. His understanding of politics as an art resonates with the idea that self-determination exists at the point of tension between our aspirations to independence and our need to be in relations with others and the world. There is always a part of intention involved in self-determination, but the latter cannot be reduced to an expression of intentionality. As Xavier Rubert de Ventos argues, "Our action on the world typically is not the result of a sovereign decision; it looks more like a compromise between what is given to us and what we are able to do, which could be translated as the imperative of making ourselves with what makes us."[68] We continue conceptualizing self-determination through a Kantian philosophy of autonomy and will. We accept Kant's claim that only in this way can self-determination be considered the highest mark of political maturity, but this is only to conceal a vulnerability that cannot be completely escaped.

Weber's perspective on the shortcomings of the Kantian understanding of responsibility (or conviction in Weberian language) and his insight into conceiving politics as an art that

[68] Xavier Rubert de Ventos, *Ética sin atributos* (Barcelone: Anagrama, 1996), quoted in Daniel Innerarity, *Éthique de l'hospitalité*, trans. Blance Navarro Pardinas and Luc Vigneault (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2009), 14. My translation.

requires balancing seemingly irreconcilable principles of action challenge the centrality of intention and will in self-determination. This, however, is the extent of Weber's contribution to our understanding of what it means "to be the way we relate to others and the world." The question of how to reconcile self-determination and relationality remains.

One author who has offered invaluable insight into the question of what it means *to be* in relations is Martin Buber. Buber is a precursor thinker of reciprocity and his book *I-Thou,* published in 1923, indirectly approaches the question of self-determination through the perspective of deep relationality. Far from attempting to contain the significance of relationality, as so many modern Western thinkers have done before him, Buber claims we need to embrace that aspect of being human and reconnect with our ability to relate with others and the world. The author does not refer to self-determination directly but offers insight into this question by showing how the way we relate to someone or something affects us. He does it by looking at three spheres of relations: with humans, nature, and God.

For Buber, there are two "basic words" a person can speak as a way of addressing others and the world more generally: I-It and I-You. Each of them "[establishes] a mode of existence."[69] Put differently, these words reflect humans' "twofold attitude"[70] towards what is "other" to them. The basic word I-It is spoken when the self (I) sees the other as an object (It). Alternatively, the basic word I-You describes a relationship in which I approaches You as another living being who is also an I. The "Other" in the relationship is seen as an equal endowed with a consciousness of its own, as opposed to a thing or an object. The I-It relationship is utilitarian in essence. Its purpose is to objectify the other party to the relationship, which is only one step away from claiming ownership of it. On the contrary, the I-You relationship aims

[69] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 53.
[70] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 53.

at being in relation with You. Buber writes: "[w]hoever says You does not have something; he has nothing. But he stands in relation."[71]

Buber questions the very possibility of the existence of the modern individual subject outside of relationality. Indeed, he claims that "[t]here is no I as such but only the I of the basic word I-You and the I of the basic word I-It."[72] Buber also claims that when "a man says I, he means one or the other."[73] Buber is assertive: we do not have a choice but to speak one of the two basic words; human subjectivity depends on it. For him, the I has no existence prior to or aside from its entering in relation. There is no I speaking for itself outside of these relationships, because there is no place where to retreat that would save humans from having to interact with various forms of difference. Buber writes: "[b]asic words are spoken with one's being. When one says You, the I of the word pair I-You is said, too. When one says It, the I of the word pair I-It is said, too."[74] The nature of the I – its quality as a subject – is bound to which of the two type of relations they are invested in, because as Buber explains, "[t]he I of the basic word I-You is different from that in the basic word I-It."[75]

In addition to questioning modern individualism, Buber's contribution to our understanding of relational self-determination comes from his attempt to reconcile intentionality and relationality. According to Robert Misrahi, the speaking of the basic words is guided by an intention developed in the human consciousness.[76] To speak one or the other of those basic words is to adopt a certain way of being through a certain mode of relating.[77] They each convey a different intention, in act and consciousness, with regards to the being, people, or thing that is

[71] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 55.
[72] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 54.
[73] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 54.
[74] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 54.
[75] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 53.
[76] Robert Misrahi, "Martin Buber, Philosophe de la relation," *Revue du MAUSS* 47 (2016): 37.
[77] Robert Misrahi, "Martin Buber, Philosophe de la relation," 37.

being addressed. One could say that the self has a choice in the types of relations it wants to have with others – a choice that is reflected in the basic word that is used to address them. However, the role of intention in Buber's work is always interdependent with the consciousness' involvement with others and the outside world. This intention itself is always a product of relationality.

To each basic word corresponds a vision of the world that Buber calls the It-world and the You-world. For example, the process of objectification that defines the I-It relationship is necessarily and exclusively contained within an empirical order – i.e. within an understanding that reduces the world to an empirical reality. When speaking the word I-It, I expresses its pretension to knowing It, at least in potentiality. To address someone or something with the I-It word is to try to make that person or that thing fit an empirical order.[78] The problem is that this empirical order is never more than a reductionist account of the boundless possibilities offered by the world when this one is seen as a world of relations.[79] This reductionism applies to the I too, and Buber claims: "the basic word I-It can never be spoken with one's whole being."[80]

On the contrary, the I-You word describes an all involved presence of the self that does not exist in the I-It relationship. And while each basic word refers to a type of *relationship*, the I-You word conveys, according to Misrahi, "a relational attitude."[81] The I-You relationship is one where the self is closely involved with others and the world. As opposed to the I-It relation of objectification (which is necessarily closed and prefigured), this one denotes an intention to be invested in something that is actively relational. You is an active participant to the relationship,[82] because the I-You relationship is non-finite and so are all beings taking part to it. Encounters

[78] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 80-2.
[79] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 69.
[80] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 54.
[81] Robert Misrahi, "Martin Buber, Philosophe de la relation," 39. My translation.
[82] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 61.

happening in the I-You mode are what Andre Metcalfe and Ann Game have described as "meeting as the creative presence of undefined difference."[83] And it is by entering this "living world of relations"[84] that we engage in reciprocity. For Buber, the I and the You found in the basic word I-You have no borders. Borders are what define objects in the context of I-It relationships.[85]

Buber is aware that there is vulnerability in being actively invested in I-You relationships. The You-world is described in the following terms: "[it] is unreliable, for it appears always new to you, and you cannot take it by its word. It lacks density, for everything in it permeates everything else. It lacks duration, for it comes even when not called and vanishes even you cling to it. It cannot be surveyed: if you try to make it surveyable, you lose it."[86] In addition, Buber describes I-You relationships as melancholic.[87] But even then, humans appear less vulnerable than when reduced to being objects in an ordered, yet rigid and finite world. Indeed, the most vivid expression of vulnerability found in the book *I-Thou* does not come from Buber's description of I-You relations, but rather from the one he makes of the ever-growing presence and influence of I-It relations. For Buber, this corresponds inevitably to a loss in the human ability to relate.[88] Relationality is not to be feared; humans' only chance at freedom is found in the You-world and in I-You relations. About the You-world and what it means to humans, Buber claims:

> You cannot come to an understanding *about* it with others; you are lonely with it; but it teaches you to encounter others and to stand your ground in such encounters; and through the grace of its advents and the melancholy of its departures it leads you to that

[83] Andrew Metcalfe and Ann Game, "Meetings: Gifts Without Exchange," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2008): 6, DOI: 10.1177/1367549407084966
[84] Robert Misrahi, "Martin Buber, Philosophe de la relation," 39. My translation.
[85] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 54.
[86] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 83-4.
[87] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 89.
[88] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 89.

> You in which the lines of relation, though parallel, intersect. It does not help you to survive; it only helps you to have intimations of eternity.[89]

Conclusion

In conclusion, to claim that vulnerability is a normal consequence of relationality and to argue for recognizing the central role it plays in the hegemonic conception of self-determination as/through sovereignty does not mean to suggest that this is all there is to relationality. Buber's work shows that by embracing relationality we can find ways of balancing it with self-determination. The question is how to reconceptualise self-determination in a way that acknowledges that vulnerability is to a certain extent inescapable without being overwhelmed by it. Paradoxically, as I will further argue in the subsequent two chapters, it is when trying to defeat vulnerability by recourse to sovereignty that the former is exacerbated. I argue that in order to get out of this logic where vulnerability and sovereignty reinforce one another, we need to consider alternative approaches that have made relationality a central feature of self-determination rather than an obstacle to it. As Buber's work suggests, vulnerability is not always a concern of primary importance for people who have made relationality their starting point and focus. To put it differently, engaging the question relationality does not *necessarily* lead to sovereignty, as the canon on political modernity suggests. Before discussing what an alternative relational view of self-determination might look like, however, I further explore in the following two chapters how the idea of self-determination as/through sovereignty took form, with at its very core the notion of vulnerability, and how and it became seen as the key to Québécois self-determination.

[89] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 84.

Chapter Two: Hobbes and the co-constitutive relationship between vulnerability and sovereignty

Introduction

Interrogating the theoretical foundations of the hegemonic approach to self-determination in light of issues of relationality and vulnerability is revealing of how the logic of sovereignty serves to entertain the illusion that it is possible to achieve *in*vulnerability in self-determination. In this chapter, I turn to Hobbes's *Leviathan* to explore how this illusion is constructed. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes presents a conception of the figure of a forceful sovereign with absolute authority to rule over its subjects and the messy agitation of their passions and conflicts. Hobbes himself was well aware that the sovereign remains vulnerable, particularly to internal conflict. Nevertheless, the idea of sovereignty being opposed to vulnerability became very influential and continues to be today. In my view, Hobbes provides one of the most insightful and influential articulations of the role of sovereignty in perpetuating the ideal of the self as an *in*vulnerable atomistic political entity. It is in this sense that I read *Leviathan* as a theory of self-determination.

Departing from conceptions of the political that ascribe divine or natural origins to political structures and institutions, Hobbes belongs to the infancy of a long liberal tradition that derives political order "from an immanent source: our *selves*."[90] Hobbes is often described as the philosophical father of the "autonomous, self-defining, integrated and internally unified"[91] political subject. And those qualities of the Hobbesian subject have durably transformed into political norms through which politics is conceived and enacted. Yet, reading Hobbes by focusing solely on the issue of sovereignty runs the risk of obfuscating the sustained significance

[90] Shiloh Y. Whitney, "Dependency Relations: Corporeal Vulnerability and Norms of Personhood in Hobbes and Kittay," *Hypatia* 26, no. 3 (Summer, 2011): 555.
[91] Samantha Frost, *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker: Hobbesian Reflections on Ethics and Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 7.

of vulnerability, both within Hobbes's theory and in the way we generally practice politics today. Readings of Hobbes that focus strictly on sovereignty tend to promote the idea that vulnerability precedes and opposes sovereignty. The social contract is then presented as the point of passing from one to the other. As this chapter demonstrates, however, by no means does sovereignty signify the end of vulnerability.

Through Hobbes's *Leviathan*, I see modern sovereignty as a complex and multifaceted political notion that stands as the combination of two ideals, both fetishized within mainstream modern Western political thought: certainty and security. The underlying condition for the realization of these ideals is autonomy. In this chapter I seek to demonstrate that sovereignty was developed as a response to vulnerability and as an attempt to create certainty and security regarding one's conditions of existence. The Hobbesian tale of the state of nature is there to remind us of our exposure to violence and convince us that vulnerability is to be overcome at any cost. For Hobbes, this is done by politically limiting the significance of relationality in our lives. His theory of sovereignty is a theory of self-determination in the sense that it aims at enabling acting on the basis of a distinct and stable sense of self. With regard to the specific process of self-determination, modern sovereignty lies on the suggestion that certainty and security are realistically attainable for a self that is an individual atomistic subject. Certainty and security are the ultimate goods of sovereignty, itself the end goal of the modern conception of self-determination. As one of the most important thinkers of sovereignty, I argue that Hobbes should be seen as a forefather of modern, non-relational self-determination.

More precisely, I have four reasons for turning to *Leviathan*. The first one is that the Hobbesian figure of the sovereign and its embodiment in the state form remain the epitome of self-determination as/through sovereignty. In other words, Hobbes's theory of sovereignty

remains an unpaired referential framework when it comes to imagining what it means to be a self-determined subject in the world. The second reason has to do with the idea that Hobbes developed said theory as a way to override an original state of human vulnerability. Hobbes "acknowledges the pervasiveness and political significance of vulnerability"[92] as a primordial factor in his theory of sovereignty. The most obvious sign of this engagement with the significance of human vulnerability comes through Hobbes's concern for a person's bodily integrity or the "fear of Death, and Wounds."[93] In this chapter, however, I suggest that focussing on the two ideals of certainty and security allows for moving beyond the vulnerability of the finite human body to engage a deeper understanding of the relationship between vulnerability and sovereignty. The third reason is that, while Hobbes takes very seriously the problem of human vulnerability, he does so through a very limited and biased understanding of the multifaceted relational condition underpinning this reality. This explains why Hobbes sees vulnerability strictly as an impediment to be overcome at any cost and not as a feature of relationality and inherent issue of self-determination. Finally, Hobbes helps us understand why there always seem to be a tension (as well as a constant shift) between the individual and the collective when discussing theories of self-determination. In *Leviathan* the social contract occurs when the individual person is proven unable to attain certainty and security by its own means and within the limits of its individuality. In other words, collective self-determination intervenes when individual self-determination proves insufficient in providing the conditions of certainty and security that would put an end to the human condition of vulnerability. The passage from individual to collective self-determination in Hobbes is foundational to our current hegemonic perspective.

[92] Shiloh Y. Whitney, "Dependency Relations," 560.
[93] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. MacPherson (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 162.

This chapter is organized in two main sections. I begin by focusing on the issue of uncertainty that is implied by relationality and how it affects self-determination. For this first section, drawing from arguments by Havercroft and Richard Tuck according to which the Hobbesian concept of sovereignty has been developed in response to the pervasiveness of sceptical doubt during the time Hobbes was writing. The second section is a discussion of the problem of security and aims to tackle the political role played by the Hobbesian notion of vainglory in the sovereignty-based model of self-determination. For the argument presented in this last section, I am greatly indebted to Julie E. Cooper and her interpretation of the meaning of humility in relation to vainglory in Hobbes's work, before and after the social contract. While I agree with most of Cooper's argument regarding the dangers associated with vainglory, I eventually depart from it by arguing that the sovereign has a privileged right to vainglory.

The overall aim of this chapter is to show how we stand mistaken on the nature of sovereignty when we fail (or refuse) to see it as little more than covering up a vulnerability that cannot be escaped for it originates in our relational nature. As my analysis of *Leviathan* below shows, the denial of the limits of sovereignty for durably overcoming vulnerability has been inscribed in its very purpose since Hobbes. Vainglory *serves* the purpose of sovereignty in entertaining the idea that the sovereign can provide certainty and security even when it cannot. Considering how denial through vainglory is an inherent part of sovereignty, it can be concluded that vulnerability too is inherent to sovereignty.

Certainty

The problem of uncertainty in self-determination relates directly to the last two implications of relationality and aspects of vulnerability presented in the previous chapter. The ever-remaining part of unpredictability that accompanies a life lived in relations makes the outcome of the

process of self-determination uncertain. So does the idea that self-determination has more to do with the nature of our interactions with others than with will or agency over deciding *who we are*. As I mentioned previously, the position defended in this dissertation is that this is not necessarily a bad thing. On the contrary, it is within this undetermined field of relations, where things are not completely prefigured or fixed in advance of beings interacting with each other and the world, that self-determination happens. Or to frame the issue in the form of a question, what would the meaning of self-determination be, if knowledge of the self were a given, something certain and that can be taken for granted? From a relational perspective, lack of certainty gives self-determination purpose as an ongoing and dynamic practice of identification, self-awareness, belonging, and meaning construction.

Yet, from the perspective of the hegemonic modern theory of self-determination, the aspect of uncertainty carried by relationality represents a real problem. Basically, uncertainty is seen as forming an obstacle to one's ability to live a self-determined life – an obstacle to be conquered. This is a point of view that reduces the process of self-determination to the mere question of how much control people and communities have over their conditions of existence. While this is without a doubt a very important matter in self-determination, I believe it is misleading and simplistic to only approach self-determination in terms of control. On that basis, self-determination and uncertainty are conceived as a strict opposition in terms. Self-determination is said to require, at the very least, certainty over a distinct sense of self, one that can be recognized and identified as the agent of self-determination. From this perspective, self-determination requires knowing enough about others and the world around, and with enough certainty, to be able to act rationally and responsibly. Therefore, it is not difficult to see how the

general philosophical problem of sceptical doubt represents a challenge to the modern Western conception of self-determination – a problem Hobbes is attempting to resolve.

For this section I draw on an analysis of Hobbes's political thought presented by Havercroft in his book *Captives of Sovereignty*. According to Havercroft, modern sovereignty has been developed in direct response to the problem of scepticism. More precisely, Havercroft links the development of the notion of sovereignty as we know it today to the efforts of some thinkers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to develop a philosophy that would resist the attacks of sceptic thinkers. The result was a distinctly modern epistemology that "made the modern subject the foundation of knowledge claims."[94] In other words, within this epistemological horizon, the self-determination of the sovereign subject is necessary for truth claims to be possible at all. One of Havercroft's theses is that the "modern political ontology of state sovereignty was developed out of this epistemology."[95] At a broader level, Havercroft seeks to provide an argument explaining how the modern political imagination is contained and limited by sovereigntist thinking. In this sense, I find the reading of Hobbes he offers very useful for thinking about the issue of self-determination as/through sovereignty, whether in the form of the person, the political community, or the nation-state.

The political quality of the problem of uncertainty is expressed nowhere more clearly than in the Hobbesian tale of the state of nature and the related fiction of the institution of the sovereign by the social contract. The state of nature is a state of subjectivity in which self-determination is seen in everyone freely pursuing the fulfillment of their desires, the most pressing of all being the perpetuation of their existence. Self-determination can be said to exist in the state of nature to the extent that individual subjects form their own principle of existence,

[94] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3.
[95] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty*, 4.

driven by the natural principle of self-preservation. Yet, the fear that comes out of realizing that other people have an equivalent right disrupts and limits one's right to self-preservation, making self-determination a potential "war of every man against every man."[96] In other words, the subject understands itself as a self-determined being, but knows that nothing can ever be taken for granted among other self-determined beings, not even one's existence. The Hobbesian subject is able to foresee its own future, but unable to ensure it, and self-preservation (or self-determination) is a struggle and its outcome can never be held for granted.

Havercroft identifies three problems that the English philosopher sought to address. The first one is what Havercroft calls the "external world problem."[97] It questions humans' capacity to gain valid knowledge of the world. The second problem comes as a consequence of the great diversity in worldviews and moral beliefs. For Hobbes, people holding different views makes it impossible to achieve consensus on moral and ethical questions, thus compromising the alignment of ethics and politics. Finally, the third problem has to do with the context of religious turmoil that was going on at the time Hobbes was writing. Hobbes is known for his attempt to offer a response to the social and political instability caused by the questioning of traditional ecclesiastical authorities. Regardless of his personal religious views, what he fears the most is the weakening of state authority as a result of religious wars. Those three problems relate to how Hobbes approaches the problem of uncertainty in self-determination. In order to demonstrate this, I now turn to discussing each one in turn.

Firstly, Hobbes seeks to address the problem of the difficulty of knowing the world outside of ourselves. This epistemological issue rests on the idea that all knowledge regarding the nature of the world depends on human perceptions and is, therefore, uncertain to the extent

[96] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 185.
[97] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty*, 6.

that those perceptions are known to be sometimes misleading. Plus, it is often impossible to tell the difference between accurate perceptions of the world from deceiving ones. As Havercroft demonstrates in his book, the proposition that it might be impossible to achieve true knowledge of the external world carries serious political implications for Hobbes, who thinks this proposition threatens the stability of the social and political order. It does so by introducing the possibility that political judgment be entirely relative. At the heart of the issue lies the practical problem of people not being "able to agree over who and what count[s] as threats to the state's security"[98] and the subsequent difficulty to act against it. From Hobbes's perspective, it is the very possibility of political action that is at stake in this epistemological problem.

While Havercroft's interpretation is primarily focused on Hobbes's concern with the integrity of the state, I argue there is more to the English philosopher's grappling with the notion of sceptical doubt. More precisely, I interpret Hobbes's attempt to construct a theory of state sovereignty that can resists the attacks of scepticism as a way to address the broader question of the possibility of self-determination in a world where knowledge is uncertain. Indeed, nothing in the so-called "external world problem" justifies why its application should be limited to what is external to the self. If human perceptions are unreliable for acquiring knowledge of the outside world, why should they be considered accurate when it comes to the self? From this perspective, knowledge of the self is potentially as conjectural as knowledge of the world.

Philosophers other than Hobbes have tried to shield the human subject against epistemological doubt. The most obvious example is Descartes, who posits the immateriality of the human soul and the existence of God as reasons to believe in the existence of the self. This perspective resulted in the development of a philosophical stance known as solipsism, according to which the only reality that can be held for certain is the existence of the thinking subject.

[98] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty*, 7.

When it comes to self-determination, the hegemonic modern political imagination is strongly influenced by solipsism. Understanding Hobbes's position on this is important because it allows us to see why he ultimately turns to sovereignty as the key to certainty. This is why I think it is important to explore Hobbes's engagement with this question through a brief digression into exploring the influence of Descartes. It is not difficult to recognize the imprint of Descartes's mind/body dualism on solipsism, which is really a form of dualism where the human mind is opposed to the rest of the world. According to Laurence Arnault, "The function of doubt in his Discourse is thus to widen the gap between material things, the existence of which we can question, and our own person, the existence of which we cannot question, and which therefore cannot be material."[99] Descartes's approach to the notion of doubt allows for rescuing the thinking subject from the vacuum of scepticism. In doing so, he not only introduces a distinction between the human mind and the world, he also introduces a subject/object distinction that became foundational to modern Western metaphysics and contributed to making sovereignty the highest mark of politics.[100] As Samantha Frost, author of the book *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker*, explains:

> That the terms of Descartes's dualism continue to haunt our concepts of both matter and self-consciousness might be of little concern to political theorists were it not for the fact that the introspective trope that Descartes uses to portay our self-knowledge structures our conceptualization of our self-mastery. That is, a corollary of the trope of introspection is the presumption that we determine and direct our own thoughts and that we use our thoughts to control and constrain our passions and desires – a presumption that also underlies a whole range of different conceptions of what it is to be a political actor.[101]

Descartes's initial purpose in writing the *Discourse* was to provide philosophical grounds for certainty, as opposed to wanting to elaborate a theory of politics. Descartes himself in describing

[99] Laurence Renault, ed. "Présentation," *Discours de la méthode* (Paris: GF Flammarion, 2000) 16. My translation.
[100] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty*, 21.
[101] Samantha Frost, *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker*, 16.

the purpose of his method speaks to his desire for certainty, when he writes: "*j'avais toujours un extrême désir d'apprendre à distinguer le vrai d'avec le faux, pour voir clair en mes actions et marcher avec assurance en cette vie*."[102] In his efforts to fulfill this desire, Descartes weaves together the quest for certainty and a sovereign approach to self-determination – a contribution that would prove incredibly influential within the field of political philosophy against alternative conceptions of the self.[103] Hobbes then consolidates the centrality of sovereignty-based self-determination as the foundation of truth claims and condition of possibility for political action. But while the two philosophers' grappling with the problem of doubt has been mutually reinforcing over time, from the outset Hobbes objected to Cartesian solipsism with a conception of the self as an empirical and embodied reality existing amidst the natural, external world.

Hobbes responds to solipsism, first, with the proposition that at the source of human perceptions, regardless of whether they are accurate or not, there must be a material object – a body.[104] Hobbes rejects the proposition according to which ideas inside the human mind have that mind for sole origin. For Hobbes the world is entirely composed of bodies in motion and he argues that what humans perceive of the world and what they form ideas about are the effects of those bodies colliding into one another as a result of their movement through space. The chain of movement and collision follows a pattern of causal relations, as for Hobbes the whole universe is organized after the endless succession of causes and effects. Thus, for Hobbes, humans are no different than other natural bodies. They too are naturally dependent on the same relations of cause and effect that are ruling the world. According to Polin, Hobbes thinks there is a real need to abstract the human from the natural world of colliding matter. Hobbes seeks to place the subject in a privileged position, one that allows for gaining knowledge and control of the exterior

[102] René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, ed. Laurence Renault (Paris: GF Flammarion, 2000), 39.
[103] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty*, 78
[104] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 85.

world. The importance of this move cannot be overemphasized. Answering the problem of epistemological doubt is a question of life and death for the Hobbesian subject. As Polin argues, for Hobbes, "the end goal of knowledge is to control nature because it is the only way t survive."[105]

A number of questions come out of this. The first question is: How does Hobbes create a human exception for a form of self-determination that is specifically political out of this pre-political metaphysics? A related one is: How does Hobbes extricate human subjects from their contingency on relations of causality and create the conditions of possibility for political action towards a chosen end?

The answer to these questions is found in Hobbes's philosophy of language or in his nominalism. This is where we also find his answer to the epistemological problem of uncertainty in knowledge. As Frost explains, using language enables humans to organize their thoughts and perceptions in complex patterns from which they gain knowledge of the world.[106] Hobbes sees knowledge acquired through language as the key to the proper conduct of politics and the means to creating order over the "irregularities prevailing in political phenomena."[107] For example, humans would have never been able to pass the social contract without having developed this ability to use language.[108] The act of speech is the beginning of politics in Hobbes. Hobbes theory of language depends largely on the act of naming, that is, on labelling the different objects of the world and turning them into objects of speech, which are also objects of thought. The words we speak serve to communicate the result of an internal thought process about the world.

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[105] Raymond Polin, *Politique et philosophie chez Hobbes* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1977), xviii My translation. See also Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 116.
[106] Samantha Frost, *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker*, 30.
[107] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 219.
[108] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 100.

Those words are arbitrary in the sense that they are the result of human will. As Polin explains, "Above anything else, Hobbes seeks to connect the existence of words to the arbitrary quality of the process by which they are invented. The human being is attached to speech *because* it is arbitrary."[109] This notion of arbitrariness is crucial to understand Hobbes's theory of sovereignty. For one thing, it is this very arbitrariness that makes naming the first act of sovereignty. As Wolin explains:

> What was breathtaking about the enterprise was that it rested upon a conception of truth not as a faithful report of external 'reality' but as an 'arbitrary' construction of the human mind. By the rational ordering of names the universe took on intelligible meaning and man became the maker of his own rationality.[110]

I link this point back to the problem of doubt. It is important to remember that Hobbes takes seriously the idea that our sense may be unreliable. His solution to this problem is nominalism and the knowledge system it allows, regardless of whether or not the latter leads to an accurate representation of the world. What matters is that humans have the potential to arbitrarily order the world into a knowledge system.

The problem is that Hobbes's nominalism does nothing to prevent conflicts over what constitutes a proper name for a given thing. It is to be expected that different speakers will come up with different names for a single thing.[111] This is what makes Wolin describe the Hobbesian state of nature as a "condition distraught by an anarchy of meanings."[112] The great irony is that by rooting the origin of words in the arbitrary will of the human subject, Hobbes ends up facing again the same problems that made him want to address scepticism in the first place. With everyone being equally able to name things as they think fit and no mechanism for dealing with conflicts, one question remains: how can humans proceed to construct a body of knowledge that

[109] Raymond Polin, *Politique et philosophie chez Hobbes*, 6. My translation and emphasis.
[110] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 220.
[111] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 109.
[112] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 230.

is reliable and unquestionable? Hobbes's nominalism creates the need for a higher power to rule over conflicts and fix the meaning of words. The answer is found in the figure of the Arbitrator, which is only another name for the sovereign.

Ultimately, the Hobbesian theory of nominalism calls for the constitution of an absolute sovereign to put an end to all debates regarding the meaning of truth.[113] For human rationality to succeed in creating knowledge out of the "uncertainty of nature's code,"[114] the subjects must hand over to the sovereign their right to exercise independent judgment.[115] This solution is only partly satisfying, however. As Havercroft claims, "giving the power to make final judgments in disputes concerning security and truth simply shifts the problem of scepticism to the sovereign."[116] More than perfect knowledge of the world, what matters most is the sovereign's ability to enforce his judgment as the only valid truth. In this sense, self-determination in the state form and under the unified authority of sovereignty is, as Wolin argues, "more than a method for establishing peace."[117] It also serves to create a community that operates as a "political universe of unequivocal meaning."[118] And as Wolin further explains: "the redefinition of political reason had come to associate reason, not with truth, or intrinsic validity, but with certainty"[119] – a certainty which relies on the sheer power of sovereignty.[120]

Before turning to discussing the second sceptical challenge Hobbes seeks to address in *Leviathan,* I want to conclude this section with a response to Frost, who draws from Hobbes's ontology of moving bodies a rather unconventional reading where the English philosopher no

[113] Richard Tuck, "The Utopianism of Leviathan," in *Leviathan after 350 years,* ed. Tom Sorell and Luc Foisneau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 132.
[114] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 232.
[115] Gregory B. Sadler, "Reason as Danger and Remedy for the Modern Subject in Hobbes' *Leviathan,*" *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 35 no. 9 (2009): 1111.
[116] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty*, 67.
[117] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 232.
[118] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 232.
[119] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 233.
[120] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 233.

longer appears as the thinker of modern atomistic subjectivity. Frost rejects the idea of a Hobbesian subject as a "self-determining, self-directing, or self-sovereign agent,"[121] whose will is freely determined. My response to Frost serves to clarify how the Hobbesian critique of solipsism applies to thinking about self-determination. By rejecting solipsism, Hobbes locates self-determination in a context of worldly interactions, a point greatly emphasized by Frost. According to her, Hobbes's metaphysics leads to a very basic form of self-awareness that can be said to be relational to the extent that it is contingent on interacting with other bodies. Frost's reading is articulated around the notion of a "thinking-body" and its ability to *remember* the experience of previous stimuli. She insists that, conceived as such, the human body cannot be interpreted as being passive; it *experiences* and *responds* to external stimuli.[122] This is the process by which the self perceives itself through the contact with other bodies, even before it develops a use for language. Frost wants to establish the political significance of this form of "non-linguistic self-awareness of a sentient, animate body."[123] In doing so, she aims to challenge the widespread idea of a Hobbesian modern subject defined by individualism, led by selfishness, and for which she blames the overriding influence of Cartesian dualism on the field of politics.

Frost infers from the Hobbesian ontology of colliding bodies two relevant implications for thinking about self-determination. She claims that "our conception of the immediacy of the subject's relationship to its thoughts and desires" is "disrupted" by the idea that self-awareness depends on coming in touch with other bodies.[124] She also claims: "Hobbes's contention that our thoughts, memories, and desires are produced through our engagement with the contexts of our

[121] Samantha Frost, *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker*, 69.
[122] Samantha Frost, *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker*, 23, 27.
[123] Samantha Frost, *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker*, 24.
[124] Samantha Frost, *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker*, 33.

action over time blurs the boundaries of the self."[125] Finally, she insists: "individuals' subjective self-identity, their thoughts, and their desires are constituted and modify by their ongoing encounter and engagement with one another and with the world."[126] However, I disagree with Frost's argument regarding a relational political subject resulting from Hobbesian metaphysics of bodies. It seems that Frost's argument implies ignoring that the reason why Hobbes brings sovereignty into his system is to *contain* relationality within a given legal order. From my perspective, Frost fails to acknowledge how post-contract relationality is entirely subjected to the sovereign's arbitrary power to impose order. She mentions how Hobbes is concerned with people living in a peaceful state rather than with them being at peace with each other.[127] However, I see the Hobbesian state as a mechanism for neutralizing the political significance of relationality.

From my perspective, the Hobbesian critique of solipsism provides an interesting theoretical context for thinking about self-determination along relational grounds precisely because it shows that, if sovereignty is constructed and valued as the highest good of politics today, it is in great part due to Hobbes positing it as the only solution to the uncertainty and vulnerability of the unruly, so-called pre-political, world of relations. Self-determination as a process that implies knowledge of the self is subject to the same difficulties that make knowledge of the world uncertain, and the solution that is sovereignty is meant to rule over it all.

Secondly, Havercroft identifies the problem of ethical scepticism as another important challenge Hobbes seeks to address in *Leviathan*. Ethical scepticism relates to the issue of moral relativism to the extent that it questions the possibility of reaching consensus over the existence of universal moral principles. As Tuck explains, a "deep-rooted assumption in [Hobbes's] work [is that humans] could not enjoy a decent social existence unless they were capable of using a

[125] Samantha Frost, *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker*, 34.
[126] Samantha Frost, *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker*, 113.
[127] Samantha Frost, *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker*, 124-5.

common moral language to describe their activities."[128] More than anything else according to Havercroft, the Hobbesian state of nature is meant to be a "cautionary tale about the danger of rhetoric and ethical scepticism."[129] Drawing on the work of Quentin Skinner, Havercroft explains Hobbes's engagement with the problem of moral relativism by the resurgence of ancient rhetorical technics by sixteenth and seventeenth centuries humanists.[130] According to them, Hobbes is especially preoccupied with the use of a rhetorical technic called *paradiastole,* which consists in re-describing a certain moral vice as a virtue or the other way around, depending on the desired outcome.[131] *Paradiastole* is a powerful rhetorical tool because it allows the person practicing it to turn to their advantage previously established codes of ethics, something Hobbes fears greatly. The bottom line problem is that people inevitably end up fighting with each other over their inability "to come to agreement on the meaning of morally evaluative terms such as good and evil."[132] Here again the Hobbesian state of nature serves to make explicit the dangers associated with conflicts over the meaning of moral terms.

Without careful consideration of its political implications, the problem of *paradiastole* may appear limited to the realm of rhetoric and without connection to the issue of self-determination. However, knowing that relations of power run through the process of self-determination, Hobbes points to the political stakes in shifting the meaning of ethically loaded terms proves insightful. Consider, for example, the meaning given to the notion of treaty politics in the modern treaty process that first started in Québec with the James Bay agreement. Many Indigenous scholars, political actors and activists have rejected the idea that such process may even qualify as treaty politics, especially when instigated by governments for the purpose of

[128] Richard Tuck, *Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 55.
[129] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty*, 80.
[130] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty*, 78
[131] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty*, 81.
[132] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty*, 77.

extinguishment. From the perspective of many Indigenous peoples who are critical of the modern treaty process, what the government does is subverting the meaning of the word treaty to shine a more favourable light unto a process that goes against the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy. Hobbes would argue that the government calling the modern treaty process a treaty process is sufficient to make it so. The discrepancy that exists between the modern treaty process and how Indigenous peoples conceive treaties illustrates the political implications associated with *paradiastole*.

On the question of moral relativism, an important thing to note is that, while everyone in the state of nature is bound to the universal principle of self-preservation, the content of this principle remains undefined. The question of *how* self-preservation is to be enacted in practice finds no pre-determined answer in Hobbes's writing, and as Tuck explains, *any* belief is possible on the matter of what constitutes a valid way of preserving one's life.[133] This tells us that questions of ethical doubt and moral relativism extend beyond the difficulty of finding a universal moral language. They are also a matter of self-determination. Pleasures are deemed 'good' and displeasures 'evil,' depending solely on the subjective experience of each person.[134] Hobbes also claims people are naturally driven by their desire for what is pleasurable.[135] More precisely, what contributes to self-preservation is considered pleasurable. The drive towards the fulfillment of desires is the only thing guiding humans in their efforts to self-preserve, which is, ultimately, their only desire. According to Polin, "[t]he object of a voluntary act is always something self-interested: individual will is always self-interested."[136] As he further explains, with the Hobbesian subject being the only judge of what is good and what is bad, we are in the

[133] Richard Tuck, *Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 63.
[134] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 120.
[135] Raymond Polin, *Politique et philosophie chez Hobbes*, 59.
[136] Raymond Polin, *Politique et philosophie chez Hobbes*, 59

presence of "radical subjectivism."[137] Thus depicted by Hobbes, the state of nature serves to illustrate the uncertainty attached to making the self and its desires the measure of all things ethical and moral.

These moral considerations must be placed against the backdrop of the broader ethical question of the role of peace in Hobbesian political thought. Seeking peace constitutes the first move of the first law of nature according to Hobbes. Yet, this assertion of the fundamental importance of peace is immediately mitigated by the second part of the same law and the idea that resorting to warfare may be the only way to achieve self-protection in the event of a failure to secure peace. The first law of nature reads as follow: "every man, ought to endeavour Peace, as farre as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps, and advantages of Warre."[138] We are here faced with an unresolvable tension between positing peace as the highest good of politics and the notion that humans' most natural instinct will direct them to do everything necessary for their self-preservation. Aware as they are of living in a state of fundamental equality where everyone is entitled to the same right of self-preservation, people's life is equivalent to an endless quest for personal power in an effort to secure their existence. Concretely, what we see in Hobbes's first law of nature and depiction of the state of nature is the subordination of natural law (seeking peace) to natural right (self-preservation).[139] The result is a well-known tale of perpetual war.

According to Hobbes, only in the state form and under sovereign power can natural rights and natural law be reconciled for the benefit of peace and towards overcoming the vulnerability of the state of nature. Hobbes believes that the state allows for the socialization of subjects. This, however, requires from them that they hand their natural rights and freedom over to the

[137] Raymond Polin, *Politique et philosophie chez Hobbes*, 130.
[138] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 190.
[139] Richard Tuck, *Hobbes*, 102.

sovereign in exchange for civic rights. While the role of peace is commonly approached from the perspective of the problem of security, I look at it from the angle of the lack of certainty in self-determination. The suggestion is that there is more at stake in the relation between peace and self-determination than a focus on security would suggest. Recalling that self-determination is a process pertaining to identification, self-awareness, belonging, and meaning construction, and how all of these phenomena intersect to create conditions of possibility for engaged responsible action, I want to draw attention to this famous passage from *Leviathan* in which Hobbes exposes his views on the impossibility when living in the state of nature of achieving anything durable beyond the immediacy of the present moment. About the state of nature, Hobbes writes:

> There is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts, no Letters, no Society, and which is worst of all, continual feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.[140]

Hobbes's obsession with representing the hardship of life in the absence of a sovereign shows his inability to imagine that a rich context for self-determination may exist outside of the state. Finding a way to survive is the extent to which self-determination exists in the state of nature. This is why people want to trade their freedom for the chance to pursue peaceful personal self-determination under the authority of the sovereign.

Several authors have argued that Hobbes is a philosopher who is primarily concerned with peace. For example, Frost claims that the cultivation of peace forms an overriding ethical principle in *Leviathan*.[141] Similarly, in his article "The Utopian Leviathan," Tuck paints a rather original picture of Hobbes as a utopian philosopher for presenting a model of political

[140] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 186.
[141] Samantha Frost, *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker*, 114-6.

community that has the power to make humans better and bring peace to their lives.[142] These two authors insist on the importance of the moment when the subjects, while still in the state of nature, become aware of the necessity to abandon their most natural passions as the main source of conflict (competition, diffidence, and glory[143]), if peace is to be reached. Once the civic state comes in place, those passions that were driving the subjects to self-preservation no longer have a purpose. Even if they cannot be neutralized, they are legally contained and rendered useless, because the sovereign is now responsible for keeping everyone safe.

Yet, I think important to ask whether Hobbesian peace qualifies as peace in substance. In my view, the type of peace Hobbes promotes is essentially formal. This is in the sense that he makes peace contingent on the existence of a juridico-legal order in which conflicts are tamed through arbitration. What matters the most in Hobbes' approach to peace is the subjects consenting to the sovereign laying down the law and punishing whoever breaks it. Sovereignty is more important in guarantying peace than the process of socialization attributed to the laws of nature by which subjects are said to become more suited for peaceful relations. Hobbes makes peace dependent on the existence of a sovereign legal order. Whether this is sufficient ground to claim certainty in ethical matters is questionable because Hobbes's solution to ethical uncertainty rests on the same arbitrary foundations as the one he offers in response to epistemological doubt. In response to a problem that needs to find its answer in politics, Hobbes offers an authoritative solution that does little more than masking the ethical uncertainty that comes from living in a world where perspectives on self-determination are multiple and, at times, conflicting.

Thirdly, Hobbes grapples with the problem of religious uncertainty, and *Leviathan* is commonly read as a reflection on the dire consequences of the English civil war, which was

[142] Richard Tuck, "The Utopianism of Leviathan."
[143] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 185.

"triggered in large part due to disputes over the relationship between the Crown and the practice of religion."[144] Hobbes is famous for his fear that religious upheavals would lead civic society into disorder. The application of sceptical doubt to religious matters and the questioning of the traditional monopoly of ecclesiastic authorities during Hobbes's time carried two main political consequences. The first is that it allows for the emergence of competing religious authorities, which all have an interest in seizing political power to establish their faith as the only true faith. From the moment the king's divine right is subject to doubt, the sovereign becomes replaceable. For Hobbes, this leads to the greatest uncertainty. It also ties into the second consequence of religious scepticism, which is the fear of religion conflicting with state interests. In other words, religious scepticism represents a threat to the unity of the state on two accounts. It introduces the possibility of a conflict between various beliefs regarding the content of the law of God. It also introduces the possibility of a conflict between obeying the law of God and obeying the law of the Sovereign. In sum, with religious scepticism comes the dual realization that the stability of the state is contingent on the degree of unity of civic society and that this unity is fragile and not to be taken for granted.

In this sub-section, I focus more directly on the question of *collective* self-determination than in the two previous ones. Collective self-determination in *Leviathan* happens only after the social contract, and it is only possible in the form of the state and under the authority of the sovereign. While this power apparatus is meant to put an end to the uncertainty of the state of nature, religious scepticism illustrates how collective self-determination in the state form is no more immune to the problem of uncertainty than the individual subject prior to the contract. Religious scepticism brings a preoccupation over the difficulty of achieving unity. To this day, the solution proposed by Hobbes remains influential for how we address disunity in the state.

[144] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty*, 99

For Hobbes, who has made the basic unit of politics a self-defining atomistic subject, religious scepticism brings the question of how to reconcile two things. On the one hand, there is a conception of the individual as able to reason and act autonomously, along with an argument supporting its natural right to do so. On the other hand, there is the need to contain the exercise of this right so that it does not compromise the cohesion of society under sovereign rule. Hobbes supports an individual's ability and right to interpret the scripture, but also wants to make sure this will not lead to people fighting over their different religious interpretations. According to Havercroft, Hobbes's solution to the problem is to establish a distinction between honour and worship.[145] Honour is personal and has to do with an individual's interior beliefs regarding the content of God's law. Worship, however, is inherently public and defined by Hobbes as "the externall signes appearing in the Words, and Actions of Men."[146] In other words, worship is the public demonstration of faith. As Havercroft mentions, the purpose of this distinction between honour and worship is that it creates "a space where an individual's private beliefs need not accord with their public demonstration of faith."[147]

Hobbes also makes an additional distinction between free and commended worship. Worship is free when it aligns with the personal belief of the worshiper, and it is commended when determined by the sovereign.[148] Commended worship is important for Hobbes because it represents a first step toward creating the condition of possibility for unity among people holding different sets of beliefs. Hobbes claims that worship is "never without some Restraint, either from the Lawes, or from the opinion of men; which is contrary to the nature of Liberty."[149] When it comes to the question of the unity of civic society, the subjects' inner beliefs are ultimately

[145] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty*, 105.
[146] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 399.
[147] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty*, 105.
[148] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 400.
[149] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* , 401.

irrelevant. In contrast, the importance of commended worship cannot be overestimate as it contributes to turning the multitude of men into a united people. Havercroft raises an interesting point when he writes: "visibility of worship is what gives worship its significance."[150] In other words, worship finds its value not in honesty of beliefs, but in obedience and its effect in consolidating sovereign power. This notion is further reinforced when Hobbes argues that commended worship to God is analogous to the worship the subjects owe the sovereign. This is expressed in the following excerpt, where Hobbes writes:

> The End of Worship amongst men, is Power. For where a man seeth another worshipped, he supposeth him powerfull, and is the readier to obey him; which makes his power greater. But God has no Ends: the worship we do him, proceeds from our duty, and is directed according to our capacity, by those rules of Honour, that Reason dictateth to be done by the weak to the more potent men, in hope of benefit, for fear of damage, or in thankfulnesse for good already received from them.[151]

As this discussion shows, the Hobbesian theory of sovereignty represents an inadequate answer to the problem of uncertainty in self-determination. Far from providing the key to certainty, Hobbes's theory relies on power for fixing the meaning of things when faced with doubt. It is only because the sovereign is powerful in unilaterally determining what is what that it can claim to have provided certainty to the subject. The next section will expand on the Hobbesian conception of power, as I turn to discuss the influence of Hobbes's work on the hegemonic conception of self-determination from the standpoint of a concern for security.

Security through vainglory

In addition to a profound preoccupation for certainty, the Hobbesian perspective on sovereignty is also famously structured by a concern for security. Despite the fact that Hobbes does not

[150] Jonathan Havercroft, *Captives of Sovereignty*, 106
[151] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 401.

directly address the question of self-determination, I argue that the currently hegemonic approach to self-determination is deeply influenced by his perspective. In this regard, I find analyzing the role of the notion of vainglory in *Leviathan* to be particularly insightful. In this section, building on an analysis presented by Julie E. Cooper, I reflect on the sovereign's privileged right to vainglory in order to shine light on the deceptive *in*vulnerability that is modern sovereignty.

The issue of security in self-determination is potentially relevant to all five implications of relationality and facets of vulnerability previously presented in chapter one. Three of those implications are more closely connected to the question of security. The possibility of losing our ties to others and being left unattached, the threat of assimilation when others are pursuing an *in*vulnerable (or secure) sense of self, and the risk of being hurt because of our exposure are obvious ways in which relationality may lead to insecurity. Hobbes's primary concern is with the latter – the risk of bodily harm and physical death. Yet, I believe the theory of sovereignty exposed in *Leviathan* can be interpreted more broadly so as to embrace all five aspects of vulnerability, including the ones that are not specifically tied to the issue of bodily integrity.

In the previous section I exposed how by opposing nature and politics, Hobbes reduces what he sees as our "natural" potential for self-determination to basic self-preservation. I also argued how Hobbes's argument suggests that a more sophisticated form of self-determination become available to subjects if they agree to the social contract. In the state of nature, self-determination is contingent on a zero-sum process of power acquisition, because Hobbes only thinks of it in terms of how much power one has compared to others. For Hobbes, power is "simply no more, but the excess of the power of one above that of another."[152] In this sense,

[152] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ?

Hobbesian self-determination is relative to how one compares to others in terms of power. This applies to the state of nature as well as the state.

As mentioned previously, Hobbes describes the state of nature as one of radical equality. Regardless of their actual physical strength, people have equal potential for power and an equal right to it. The problem is that, according to Hobbes's relative understanding of power, equal distribution of power leads to destruction. For Hobbes, power is only a productive force when organized hierarchically. People living in the state of nature are therefore naturally driven to seek to have as much power over others as possible, in order to escape this unsustainable equality. This has been referred to by Patapan as "the human need to create hierarchies."[153] Relations amongst subjects in the state of nature are guided only by this need for creating hierarchies. Thus, self-determination in the state of nature is reduced to a constant competitive struggle for power over others.[154] For Hobbes, all the different passions that drive humans to act for their self-preservation can be reduced to this single one: a desire for increased power.[155] This drive is endless, for it is insatiable. Hobbes describes this as a "general inclination of all mankind, a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death."[156] The reason for this is simple; nothing is permanent in the Hobbesian state of nature, except fear. There is no other way to secure the material conditions necessary to the human existence than to acquire more power. One reason why Hobbes thinks power provides the means to self-preservation is because he believes it operates as a currency for security. People willingly give their loyalty to the person with the most power in exchange for protection. Hobbes speaks of the weak's desire

[153] Haig Patapan, "'Lord Over the Children of Pride': The Vaine-Glorious Rhetoric of Hobbes's Leviathan," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 33, no. 1 (2000): 76.
[154] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 161.
[155] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ?
[156] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 161.

to please the strong for the sake of being rewarded with security. The cost of making themselves subjects to a more powerful figure is obedience.

That being said, sheer power may still be insufficient in Hobbes's view. A reputation of power, which he calls glory, is ultimately what matters most for engaging the deference of people in need of protection. Hobbes claims: "reputation of power is power,"[157] and *glory* has an important and structuring effect on social interactions. The Hobbesian subjects are motivated to exhibit proud self-esteem in the hope of appearing powerful and attracting other people's respect. This is of course further reinforced by Hobbes's claim that a man's true value is no more than it is esteemed by others.[158] It is ultimately people's belief in another person's power that will make them congregate under that person's authority. As Jamie Mayerfeld explains:

> A natural short cut for obtaining other people's services is therefore to cultivate the appearance rather than the reality of power. In this way, the contest for power is submerged in a contest for reputation (in which even the genuinely powerful must participate). We find ourselves engaged in shadow play posturing and pretending as proves convenient; victory is awarded to the most convincing performance.[159]

The trade for security begins with the reputation of power, but results in real power through the deference of the weak. People who need protection most will make themselves obedient to the person in a position to give it to them. As Mayerfeld puts it, the struggle for reputation "is no idle game, because the victor gets to convert its winnings into more tangible forms of power."[160] The important point is that power depends on the glory that is attached to appearing to be strong.

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[157] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 150.
[158] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 152.
[159] Jamie Mayerfeld, "No Peace Without Injustice: Hobbes and Locke on the Ethics of Peacemaking," *International Theory* 4, no. 2 (2012): 275.
[160] Jamie Mayerfeld, "No Peace Without Injustice," 275.

Mayerfeld identifies two important implications to the role of glory. Firstly, the interaction of glory and power leads to what he calls a "need for self-deception."[161] As he further explains, this is because "we are most successful at persuading others of our power when we believe in it ourselves. Hence the universal inclination to overestimate our own abilities."[162] This inclination finds its source in human pride and results in what Hobbes calls 'vainglory,' where someone misevaluate their actual power in relation to the one of others. Secondly, Mayerfeld argues that this tendency for self-deception is "reinforced by the fact that the imagination of our own power, real or not, is a potent source of pleasure."[163] For Hobbes, glory is always at risk of being corrupted by pride and turned into vainglory. This occurs when individual subjects "affect power that they lack, and are taken in by their own masquerade."[164] Because of how natural right plays out in the state of nature, vainglory is not something that can be easily avoided. Indeed, everything about the Hobbesian state of nature leads to vainglory, and as Cooper explains, Hobbes "laments the propensity toward delusions of grandeur."[165] It is in this context that Hobbes presents sovereignty as the only way to regulate vainglory. Fear is what brings people to reflect on vainglory and triggers the desire to put an end to their wars.[166] Individual subjects consent to the social contract upon realizing that turning to a sovereign is the only way to rule over everyone's pride at once, which is the only way to live securely. Pride must become subject to sovereign law if Hobbesian peace is to prevail.

However, the dynamic through which power operates as a currency for security carries throughout the social contract and continues structuring relations between the newly formed

[161] Jamie Mayerfeld, "No Peace Without Injustice," 276.
[162] Jamie Mayerfeld, "No Peace Without Injustice," 276.
[163] Jamie Mayerfeld, "No Peace Without Injustice," 276.
[164] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency in the Political Theory of Thomas Hobbes," *The Review of Politics* 72, no. 2 (2010): 246.
[165] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 246.
[166] Haig Patapan, "'Lord Over the Children of Pride,'" 80.

sovereign state and its subjects. This relation is also marked by the zero-sum logic of power distribution, with the only difference being that the balance of power is now overwhelmingly and unquestionably tilted in favour of the sovereign. The equality of the state of nature is replaced by a hierarchy that has the sovereign in the highest position. And if the subjects no longer obsessed with creating hierarchies where none exist, it is because they live under the authority of a sovereign. Their previous bloody quarrels have given place to what Hobbes sees as a healthy and productive competition amongst members of the civic state. The amount of power held by the subjects is of course reduced accordingly, along with their ability to live a self-determined life. Hobbes could not be more explicit: when they make the decision to enter into the contract, subjects *transfer* to the sovereign their right and power – their sovereignty. This is for Hobbes the only way to achieve security and put an end to pride-driven power games. Yet, with power remaining conceptually unchanged and following the same relative patterns of distribution before and after the contract, it bears the following question: What remains of the effect of vainglory on politics after the constitution of the state?

This is the question Cooper seeks to answer in her article "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency in the Political Theory of Thomas Hobbes." Before turning to her analysis, examining the difference Hobbes draws between glory and vainglory proves a useful starting point for thinking about role of the latter. Hobbes argues:

> Joy, arising from imagination of a mans own power and ability, is that exultation of the mind which is called GLORYING : which if grounded upon the experience of his own former actions, is the same with *Confidence* : but if grounded on the flattery of others; or onely supposed by himself, for delight on the consequences of it, is called VAINEGLORY : which name is properly given ; because a well grounded *Confidence* begetteth Attempt ; whereas the supposing of power does not, and is therefore rightly called *Vaine*.[167]

[167] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 125.

Thus, although Hobbes lists glory as one the three passions forming the "principal cause of quarrel" in the state of nature, this passage suggests that it is not as big of a problem compared to vainglory. As Cooper explains, Hobbes is of the opinion that "when individuals correctly estimate their abilities, it is legitimate to revel in the self's power."[168] Glory is the result of an accurate assessment of how one compares to others, that is, an accurate assessment of one's power. Vainglory results from delusion. This suggests that Hobbes does not take offence with the idea of glorifying in itself. The problem, as mentioned above, is that glory is a "slippery passion"[169] that leads too easily to vainglory. This is allegedly the reason why Hobbes insists on glory (not vainglory) being one of the main causes of war.

This passage also mentions that vainglory is said to be vain because it does not "begetteth attempt." In other words, it does not lead to taking action. If this is the case, why is vainglory considered so wrong? Cooper begins answering this question by differentiating between "two strands of vainglory"[170] in Hobbes's work (according to her these are more readily distinguishable in *Elements of Law* than in *Leviathan*). In *Elements*, Hobbes distinguishes between "false glory" and "vain glory," and opposes them both to glory. Cooper cites Hobbes: "False glory is derived 'not from any conscience of our own actions, but from the fame and trust of others, whereby one may think well of himself, and yet be deceived.'"[171] Vainglory, however, is compared by Hobbes to some self-satisfied "harmless daydreaming," with the suggestion that it leads to apathy.[172] The latter is the definition of vainglory that seems to have transferred into *Leviathan*, as Hobbes abandons the category of false glory. This may lead to the impression that vainglory is a problem of little consequence. Hobbes claims: "vain-glorious men, such as without

[168] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 246.
[169] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 247.
[170] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 247.
[171] Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Law* (50), quoted in Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 247.
[172] Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Law* (50), quoted in Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 247.

being conscious to themselves of great sufficiency, delight in supposing themselves gallant men, are inclined onely to ostentation; but not to attempt: Because when danger or difficulty appears, they look for nothing but to have their insufficiency discovered."[173] The question remains: If vainglory amounts to harmless daydreaming and idleness, why should we be worried about it?

According to Cooper, the absence of direct reference to the terminology of false glory should not be interpreted as to signify that its meaning has disappeared from Hobbes's political philosophy. Her analysis shows that the two strands of vainglory are now contained within a single term. Cooper claims Hobbes distinguishes between daydreamers, who would rather have their insufficiency revealed to the world than to have to play strong in front of danger, and the ones who are truly absorbed in their "delusions of grandeur"[174] and what Hobbes had previously labelled false glory. The latter represent a challenge for politics because they tend to act hastily on the basis of an inflated sense of self. As Cooper explains: "when the vain credit their delusions, they are liable to attempts feats that exceed their abilities,"[175] sometimes to the point of becoming "pugnacious, rash engagers."[176]

To support her claim Cooper points to the following excerpt from *Leviathan*, which further reveals the nuances contained in Hobbes's understanding of vainglory. Hobbes claims:

> Vain-glorious men, such as estimate their sufficiency by the flattery of other men, or the fortune of some precedent action, without assured ground of hope from the true knowledge of themselves, are inclined to rash engaging; and in the approach of danger, or difficulty, to retire if they can: because not seeing the way of safety, they will rather hazard their honour, which may be salved with an excuse, than their lives, for which no salve is sufficient.[177]

[173] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 163,
[174] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 248.
[175] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 248.
[176] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 248.
[177] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ?

According to Cooper, it is the lack of knowledge of themselves that explains the difference between the ones who are vainglorious and idle from the ones who are vainglorious and aggressive. More precisely, she claims that the knowledge of themselves that vainglorious subjects lack is knowledge of their equality and vulnerability. They present themselves and act as if they were all powerful. Cooper argues: "examined from this angle, 'vainglory' involves refusal to acknowledge that humans are equal because they are equally vulnerable."[178] She further analyzes: "men who harbour delusions of invulnerability are especially belligerent,"[179] as they demand from others "confirmation of their superiority and, when disappointed, attack those with the temerity to disrespect them."[180]

According to Cooper, Hobbes's social contract is not intended to defeat vainglory once and for all. That would be unrealistic, for "counter to our natural tendencies."[181] She rejects any interpretation of Hobbes that would claim that it is possible to achieve total security in politics. She insists on the idea that the sovereign remains very vulnerable in the face of its subjects' residual vainglory. Indeed, if they entertain a vision of themselves an invulnerable, subjects are likely to cultivate hopes of revolt and instigate trouble. This is why she insists on the need for the sovereign to "foster modesty"[182] through education. This education must be directed at perpetuating an ethos of awareness of vulnerability. Cooper contends that in *Leviathan*, "the goal is not to enthrone humans in sovereign invulnerability, but rather to achieve the right balance between bodily security and consciousness of finitude."[183] While people in the state of nature are constantly reminded of their vulnerability through the fear of a violent death, they lose sight of it

[178] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 249.
[179] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 250.
[180] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 249.
[181] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 256.
[182] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 256.
[183] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 241.

and are more likely to fall prey to vainglory when living in the security of the state. Accordingly, Cooper claims that Hobbes makes "cultivating the proper relationship to vulnerability a task for politics."[184] She rejects the idea that a sovereign that was constituted by men may have god-like powers and provide perfect security to its subjects. To imagine that the state can provide more than temporary security to the subjects amounts to vainglory.

I think Cooper makes an invaluable contribution by revealing the nuances in the way Hobbes conceives vainglory. Her contribution shines light on the link between vainglory and knowledge of the self. I also appreciate her insistence on the idea that vulnerability remains a factor of politics after the institution of sovereignty. In other words, I think Cooper makes a great contribution in the sense of showing the limits of sovereignty in overcoming vulnerability. However, I believe she stands mistaken when contending that those limits call for the sovereign to remain humble. Cooper may be right that subjects need to be reminded that they are nothing "like God: invulnerable and no longer in need of a state,"[185] but she does so at the cost of overlooking a crucial aspect of Hobbes's theory of sovereignty: he does not recognize any limits to sovereign power.

After the social contract, vainglory becomes the prerogative of the sovereign. The sovereign is not bound to the same humility requirement than its subjects. As a figure constituted by the contract but who is no party to it, the sovereign is under no legal obligation to obey his own law. Cooper's claim that the state is vulnerable to the pride of its subjects and that because of it they must cultivate humility, but this does not mean the sovereign is under any moral or legal duty to admit being vulnerable. On the contrary, this would only foster distrust in its ability to keep everyone safe. Humility and sovereignty are absolutely incompatible; they defeat one

[184] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 242.
[185] Julie E. Cooper, "Vainglory, Modesty and Agency," 266.

another, and a sovereign that *appears* vulnerable *is* vulnerable. Thus, vainglory serves the purpose of masking the limits of sovereignty in overcoming vulnerability. The sovereign cannot admit failing at providing certainty and security to the subjects; it would trigger subjects to question the state. The only way the sovereign can be secure in its own existence and provide security to the subjects is by pretending to be stronger than it is. To paraphrase Hobbes, reputation of vulnerability is vulnerability. If the sovereign were to admit being vulnerable, or only let this possibility influence his actions, it would be so detrimental to the stability of the state that it would threaten its existence.

For the most part, and here I agree with Cooper, scholars of Hobbes have shown a lack of attentiveness to the limits of sovereignty in overcoming vulnerability, focussing instead on the unbound legitimacy of the sovereign in ruling over its subjects, as if that were equivalent to absolute power. It is only by looking at the role of vainglory after the contract that one begins to see the continued vulnerability of the sovereign, and therefore the continued vulnerability of the subjects. It is probably by looking at relations between sovereigns, as international relations scholars have done, that one sees with the most clarity the limits of sovereign power in achieving invulnerability in self-determination. Along the same lines, I argue that a reading of Hobbes that focuses on the continued relevance of vainglory as a means for ruling goes a long way in challenging the idea that sovereignty can provide security.

It is certainly the case that Hobbes asserts the need for the sovereign to rule in accordance with the laws of nature. Some authors interpret this as the mechanism by which Hobbes imposes limits on the exercise of sovereignty, thus allowing for balancing what remains of the liberty of the subjects with due obedience to the law.[186] Yet, I argue that putting too much emphasize on the influence that the laws of nature have on the sovereign only obfuscates a more important and

[186] Samantha Frost, *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker.*

comprehensive message from *Leviathan*, which is the need for the self-perpetuation of sovereignty. The sovereign's duty to rule according to the laws of nature is subject and secondary to the duty of doing everything necessary to make sure the sovereign remains sovereign. As far as the sovereign is concerned, vainglory plays an invaluable role in its self-perpetuation. When it belongs to the sovereign, vainglory serves to maintain, not so much the illusion of power (for there is no doubt that the powers of the sovereign are greater than the ones of the subjects), but rather what this power can accomplish, especially with regard to the task of overcoming a vulnerability that originates in relationality.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have offered an interpretation of *Leviathan* as a political response to the problem of vulnerability. Through a focus on the two problems of uncertainty and insecurity, Hobbes engages vulnerability as a corollary to the inescapable reality of life in the material world where people interact with one another. Hobbes's state of nature is a theoretical reflection on the political significance of vulnerability and serves to communicate the necessity of sovereignty. Yet, because it proceeds from a remarkably limited understanding of the complex nuances of human relationality, not to mention a total oversight of the vital character of relationality, the theory of modern sovereignty that Hobbes develops is necessarily inadequate. Indeed, Hobbes's theory of sovereignty operates through the foreclosing human relationality on two fronts. Firstly, Hobbes aims at limiting the effects of doubt and creates conditions of certainty in epistemological, ethical, and religious matters through recourse to sovereign power. Secondly, Hobbes seeks to solve the problem of insecurity by entrusting the sovereign with the prerogative of vainglory.

As a last remark before turning to the next chapter, I want to address the relation between individual and collective self-determination. In this chapter, I have argued that for Hobbes collective self-determination in the state form is made necessary once individual self-determination reaches its limits. When self-determination in the form of the individual sovereign subject in the context of the state of nature proves insufficient in overcoming vulnerability, self-determination in the form of the civic state becomes a necessity. Individual sovereignty is then limited to whatever civil liberties the state will grant to it subject. In any case, the invulnerable sovereign atomistic subject is confirmed as the "self" in self-determination and as the condition of possibility for political action. The problem is that the vainglorious character of Hobbes's project is largely obfuscated.

The idea that vainglory is a prerogative essential to the performance of sovereignty has several implications for thinking about self-determination. I argue that the hegemonic understanding of self-determination that dominates Western politics today as integrated this denial. It continues to operate on a denial of relationality and to pretend that vulnerability can be reduced by exercising power over others and the world. More precisely, self-determination as/through sovereignty functions as an assertion of the possibility of achieving certainty and security regarding the human conditions of existence. The next chapter will discuss how Québec's nationalist movements after the Quiet Revolution bear the mark of Hobbes's legacy for thinking about self-determination, especially in relation to Indigenous peoples' self-determination.

Chapter Three: Québec

Introduction

The issue of the vulnerability of the Québécois people forms a recurring theme in Québec. This is particularly evident when analyzing Québec's nationalism from the perspective of its dealing with the two problems of uncertainty and insecurity that accompany deep relationality. Indeed, this chapter argues that this recurring theme speaks to a collective difficulty of coming to terms with the impossibility for the self to know itself with certainty. In other words, I argue that the Québécois feel vulnerable in the face of this issue that can never be perfectly resolved, that of the meaning of being Québécois. I also argue that they feel vulnerable with regard to impossibility of achieving total security in a world where we cannot avoid being in relations with others. While these are universal problems, it is important to recognize that in Québec a combination of various majority/minority dualities has created and continues perpetuating a context of co-existence where vulnerabilities are being exacerbated. This applies of course to the vulnerability of Indigenous people(s) but also to the one of settlers.

In this context, the ideal of sovereignty as it is defined in modern Western political thought appears as an irresistible promise that overcoming vulnerability is possible. The fact that sovereignty operates through various means of denial (and remains forever aspirational rather than actual because of it) does not seem to undermine its power of attraction. The recourse to the logic of modern sovereignty as a remedy against vulnerability is also not unique to Québec. Beyond making a contribution towards a better understanding of Québécois self-determination and how it affects Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations, this chapter shows, using Québec as an example, how at the core of a conception of self that is predominantly mediated through the logic of sovereignty lies an unresolved concern for vulnerability. When resorting to sovereignty as a

means of dealing with vulnerability, Québécois are following a model that has been around since Hobbes, a model that has come to form the main norm of reference when it comes to defining political modernity. The Québécois' quest for self-determination appears then as a quest for political normalcy.

This chapter has for premise the idea that the Quiet Revolution represents an important milestone in the social, economic, and political modernization of Québec. This important moment in the history of Québec is interpreted as the beginning of a nationalist movement of self-determination aimed at redressing the situation of vulnerability in which French-Canadians found themselves by shaping a *majority* society. With regard to self-determination, the Quiet Revolution led to the creation of an alliance between three things: a national cultural identity based on the French language and a collective history among other things, the development of modern state institutions, and conceiving the land as a legally enclosed territorial unit. What has been traditionally described as a shift from ethnic to civic nationalism is more accurately described as a shift to the nation-state model of self-determination where a national group, a state government, and an enclosed territory are bound together by claims of forming a sovereign, autonomous political entity.[187] Some would object that such a characterization only applies to sovereign states recognized under international law. From the perspective presented in this dissertation, however, what is more significant than formal recognition under international law is the widespread consensus among members of Québécois society who *identify* with the nation-

[187] Gérard Bouchard, in his book *L'interculturalisme: Un point de vue québécois*, rejects the categorization of Québécois nationalist movements of self-determination along the ethnic/civic divide. He describes this categorization as an antinomy, whose categories are too extreme to accurately represent any era of Québécois nationalism. Gérard Bouchard, *L'interculturalisme: Un point de vue québécois* (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 2012), 21, 24-5.

state as the subject of collective self-determination and embrace sovereignty as its main rationale and aspiration.[188]

Québécois are in this dual position of being, on the one hand, a minority within the political context of the Canadian federation and the broader North American Anglo-Saxon cultural environment, and on the other one, a majority within the province of Québec and in relation to Indigenous peoples, immigrant populations, and other minority groups. These co-constitutive realities form two sides of a same coin. Québécois self-determination needs to be understood in light of its vulnerability, which is exacerbated by its minority status. (The first section of this chapter provides multiple examples of factors that are perceived as contributing to the vulnerability of the Québécois as a minority people.) However, the approach to self-determination that has become hegemonic in Québec follows the nation-state model and reproduces the problems that Québec nationalism was meant to redress. The only difference is that some other groups than *us* are made to feel vulnerable, among them Indigenous peoples. This chapter discusses how the Québécois's turning to a nation-state model of self-determination and its attempt to constitute itself as a sovereign political subject does not resolve the problem of vulnerability and clashes with Indigenous self-determination. The irony of this situation can only be escaped by refusing to confront the reality of the Québécois being settlers in control of a state apparatus.

In Québec like in the rest of Canada, this politico-legal apparatus where a majority people, a territory and state institutions are bound by the logic of sovereignty results in a typically statist and colonial relationship between Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. The government of Québec, like other Canadian provinces, has jurisdiction over natural resources and is in charge of

[188] Gérard Bouchard, *L'interculturalisme: Un point de vue québécois* (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 2012), 19-20.

delivering services to all its residents, including Indigenous peoples. What differs in Québec from other provinces is the fact that these competences are exercised as part of a nation-state building process. By embracing the nation-state model, the Québécois are pursuing certainty and security in self-determination. In the political imagination that supports this approach to self-determination, territorial integrity has come to stand for the projected integrity of the Self. In this context, it is difficult to imagine how a nation-to-nation relationship between equal partners can be established or renewed.

If the Quiet Revolution is presented in this chapter as a crucial turning point in the consolidation of the nation-state model, the discourse of Québécois vulnerability predates this time of major change and has continued to exist after it. The chapter begins with examples of different nationalist authors, who, at different points in time, have expressed a concern for the vulnerability of the Québécois people. These examples also show how the idea of fostering and asserting the sovereignty of Québec is readily accepted as a solution against this vulnerability. The following section presents a theoretical reflection by ethnographer Sylvie Vincent. I hope Vincent's reflection will serve as background reference for understanding what is at stake when settlers attempt to construct themselves as an *in*vulnerable sovereign subject of self-determination. The last section shows how embracing of the nation-state model and the quest for *in*vulnerability have impacted and continues impacting the relationship between Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Québec.

Vulnerability in Québécois nationalism

To my knowledge, there are very few authors in Québec, who refer directly to the term "vulnerability" when discussing Québécois self-determination. Yet, the argument presented in this dissertation rests on this idea that a perceived vulnerability of the Québécois people, and the

worry it generates regarding how to interpret the past and plan the future, form a recurring and structuring theme in the work of many thinkers of self-determination. The authors discussed in this section each refer to vulnerability in their own terms, but their concerns are similar, and together they contribute to a discourse of Québécois vulnerability.

Fernand Dumont

The study of the meaning of vulnerability in Québécois self-determination must take into account how awareness of being vulnerable has formed over time, starting long before the Quiet Revolution. This, I argue, is the underlying purpose of sociologist Fernand Dumont in his 1993 book, *Genèse de la société québécoise*. Indeed, his presentation of the slow formation of a national consciousness, from the early days of New France to the mid-nineteenth century, can also be read as a genealogy of the Québécois people's struggle with its own vulnerability. Dumont's analysis expresses his belief in a loss of meaning taking place around the time he is writing regarding what it means to be Québécois. He mentions the proliferation of alternative identities within the very society of Québec and elsewhere as a sign of such loss.[189] To be clear, Dumont thinks the homogeneity of Québec society was always projected in discourse, rather than an objective tangible fact. Yet, as someone who subscribes to an Andersonian understanding of the nation, discourses and symbolism are real in the sense that they have real effects on how people understand themselves and act in the world. He sees them as essential factors in the formation of a national consciousness.[190] Accordingly, if a loss of meaning and perceived lack of homogeneity is expressed in discourse, than this is something that needs to be

[189] Such an argument on the weakening of a collective national identity in the face of increased diversity is not unique to Dumont, especially considering that the book was written in the mid-nineties, at a time when the field of identity politics expanded considerably, which sometimes resulted in a clash with more traditional understanding of identification.
[190] Fernand Dumont, *Genèse de la société québécoise*, 15.

addressed. Dumont proposes revisiting the genesis of the formation of a Québécois sense of self,[191] with the purpose of contributing to the renewal of Québécois self-consciousness.[192]

Dumont's discourse analysis relies on an extended and varied corpus of written sources, such as history books, political speeches, and poems. He uses these sources to illuminate the conditions of our present society by looking at the past. For him, a society is the product of two main factors coming together: a nation and an organized political consciousness.[193] Both are produced by and manifested in discourse and symbolism. For Dumont, a discourse is considered national or societal, if it posits society as its *reference.* He also argues that additionally a nation needs political organization in order to become fully founded.[194] All of this was at first lacking to French Canadians, who Dumont claims, did not form an organized group with a sense of collective self. It falls outside of my purpose to summarize the sequence of historical events on which Dumont's analysis rests. What I want to emphasize is that Dumont presents the history of Québec as a history of *survivance* rather than fulfilment, mainly after the British conquest but not only.

For Dumont, a key element for explaining the slow emergence of political consciousness is found in this idea that French Canadians have always been defined from the outside of the community they formed. The meaning of their presence in North America was predominantly determined by external forces and their interests. Those external forces were, in turn, the French Crown, the Pope, and the British Empire. Only rarely in the history of Québec society has meaning been generated from the inside. After the British conquest, these external forces became openly assimilative. This resulted in internal religious and political elites adopting an apolitical

[191] Fernand Dumont, *Genèse de la société québécoise*, 13.
[192] Fernand Dumont, *Genèse de la société québécoise*, 14.
[193] Fernand Dumont, *Genèse de la société québécoise*, 16.
[194] Fernand Dumont, *Genèse de la société québécoise*, 16.

posture, i.e. a non-threatening position to avoid giving arguments to the advocates of assimilation. According to Dumont, these elites have in effect cooperated with British authorities in preventing the development of a political consciousness. As told by Dumont, the genesis of Québec society is a struggle to survive against forces that sought to either assimilate or contain French-Canadians. Dumont's historical account is structured as a constant oscillation between, on the one hand, the risk of assimilation and, on the other one, just enough cultural recognition to prevent the development of a full political consciousness that would have led to a strong movement of self-determination.

Throughout the book, various themes of vulnerability punctuate Dumont's tale of the formation of Québécois national and political consciousness. Here are a few examples. The French enterprise in North America is described as a "failure," that led settlers to feeling abandoned and nostalgic for the French motherland.[195] As for the British conquest, it is presented as the single event that had the most impact on the future development of Québec society.[196] The subsequent imposition of British institutions of governance, even when they allowed for the representation of French Canadians, is presented as having contributed their "reduction," containment, and domestication into a community with a weak political consciousness. Dumont also mentions how the British' control of the economy led to the dependency of French Canadians. Throughout these developments, the clergy, with its valorisation of a traditional, Catholic, and peasant lifestyle and its overall ideology of withdrawal from politics, is also presented as another factor of de-politicisation and oppression.

For Dumont, a society is truly "founded" once it evolves from being subjected to circumstances that are out of its control to being able to represent itself to itself – that is, as its

[195] Fernand Dumont, *Genèse de la société québécoise*, 103.
[196] Fernand Dumont, *Genèse de la société québécoise*, 86.

own reference.[197] This is the moment when the genesis is over and self-determination begins. According to him, French-Canadians were aware of their marginal position in relation to the British. They responded by turning to utopia and memory. It is through utopia and memory that they are said to have started representing themselves to themselves.[198] A certain awareness of being vulnerable was always present, however. Dumont claims the forming of a nation requires "to go down towards the anxiety of disappearing to then rise towards means of survival that do not depend strictly on political struggles."[199] Where French Canadians had been lacking a national and political consciousness,[200] the Québécois find a long history of being vulnerable and a fear of disappearing to reflect on. This, for Dumont, is the impulse to forming an independent society. Throughout the history of the genesis of Québec society as Dumont tells it, the national and political consciousness born out of the vulnerability that the fear of disappearing instigates came and went, until it finally crystalized, around the mid-nineteenth century.

On the topic of the relationship between French Canadians and Indigenous peoples, Dumont is rather critical of the colonial origins of Québec society. He points to the religious ambitions to convert Indigenous people to Catholicism and the underlying assumption of superiority, as well as to the pillage of resources. He also discusses the myth of the "good savage" and how French Canadians, while being defined primarily by reference to external forces, did the same to Indigenous peoples.[201] Yet, his critique of colonialism is limited the early stages of colonialism and tends to fade as he tells the story of the formation of a self-referential consciousness, which, I recall, he takes to be a characteristic feature of "founded" societies. Reflecting on the terms of political consciousness and self-determination in Québec is thus made

[197] Fernand Dumont, *Genèse de la société québécoise*, 9.
[198] Fernand Dumont, *Genèse de la société québécoise*, ?
[199] Fernand Dumont, *Genèse de la société québécoise*, 160. My translation.
[200] Fernand Dumont, *Genèse de la société québécoise*, 12.
[201] Fernand Dumont, *Genèse de la société québécoise*, ?

incongruent with a critical engagement with the colonial conditions of possibilities underlying such consciousness and self-determination, at least in appearance.

Lionel Groulx

No review of the role of vulnerability in nationalist thought in Québec would be complete without a reference to the work of Lionel Groulx. This is especially true in the context of an argument aimed at showing how perceptions of being vulnerable often results in attempts to resist the influence of others in our lives. As a prominent clergy figure of the Duplessis era before the Second World War, Groulx was also an intellectual and a political figure of French-Canadian nationalism. In the field of Québécois nationalist literature, Groulx's work remains the epitome example of how vulnerability may serve as a rationale for promoting a form of nationalism whose purpose is to turn away from others. Groulx's work is one of the earliest examples of a French-Canadian nationalist discourse directed at shielding the nation against alleged exterior threats that are accused of being assimilationist and rendering its future uncertain.

According to Groulx, the French-Canadian situation is nothing short of tragic, as he claims the nation's existence is threatened. Groulx is not advocating for the full juridico-political sovereignty of the French-Canadian nation, but his argument for autonomy and self-rule is without a doubt guided by the logic of sovereignty. The language used by Groulx to express vulnerability stresses the precarity and smallness of the French-Canadian nation. Groulx also takes issue with the dependency of French-Canadians on external capital. According to Groulx, seeking autonomy is the only thing that could guarantee the *survivance* of the nation. In Groulx's work, nationalism is presented as an essential and regulative factor of human existence. It is said to constitute a vital aspect of communal life and is regarded as the guiding force of a people's

destiny.[202] In his attempt to capture the *essence* of the French-Canadian nation, that which should be protected and celebrated with nationalist pride, Groulx frames it as "anti" to a plethora of things: the state, materialism, Anglo-Saxon culture, urbanism, industrialization, unbridled progress, and individualism. This list of "evils" is not exhaustive. Groulx's definition of the French-Canadian nation stresses its attachment to Catholic institutions and praises the guidance of clergy figures. The French language, a rural and peasant lifestyle, the cultivation of traditions, and a communitarian identity are other defining characteristics of French-Canadian nationalism for Groulx.

As a remedy, Groulx advocates for French-Canadians to pursue autonomy in all matters, but especially when it comes to the economy, by exploiting the land and its natural resources. Groulx is fully aware of the importance of having access to the land for the sustainment of self-determination. I argue that his perspective on this issue and the type of territorialisation he promotes are typical of state-based nationalism. In his view, capitalizing on the land and the extraction of its resources is the key to national emancipation and should be done for the exclusive benefit of French-Canadians. To my knowledge, Groulx makes no reference to the fact that this land belongs in the first place to the various Indigenous peoples who have been living on it for immemorial time. He rather focuses his attention on the domination of the economy by "foreign" capital, which he describes as being mainly in the hands of the Anglophone minority.[203] This is for him the main source of French-Canadian vulnerability.

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[202] Lionel Groulx, "Problème de l'heure: problème d'orientation. L'économique et le national," Conference presentation from February 12th, 1936 at the Chambre cadette de commerce de Montréal and February 14th, 1936 at the jeune Barreau de Québec (Montréal: L'imprimerie populaire ltée, 1936), *Les classiques des sciences sociales* http://classiques.uqac.ca/

[203] Lionel Groulx, *Méditation patriotique* (Montréal: Bibliothèque de l'Action française, 1920), 5, http://www.fondationlionelgroulx.org/IMG/pdf/lionel-groulx-meditation-patriotique.pdf

Today there is a widespread consensus in Québec that Groulx's work represents a primary example of conservative and reactionary nationalist thought. Groulx's nationalism is premised on a very homogeneous and essentialist definition of the nation and promotes a conception of autonomy that is based on the rejection, denial even, of difference as a vital component of life. In other words, and to use a commonplace expression when discussing his work, Groulx's nationalism depends on rejecting the so-called "Other". It has left us with the image of a timorous and defensive nation, the perfect example of a nation that "folded unto itself." This is the image of a nation that cannot bear the influence of difference and must protect itself by turning away from the outside, while denying its own internal diversity.

Hubert Aquin

Another indelible expression of vulnerability is found in the work of Hubert Aquin, an acclaimed novelist and thinker of French Canadian nationalism and independence. In his famous text *La fatigue culturelle du Canada français*, which he wrote in response to Trudeau's no less famous *La nouvelle trahison des clercs*, Aquin presents the French Canadian people as an *affected* and *blasé* people "who does not believe in itself nor in anything else."[204] The psychological attributes of the cultural fatigue identified by Aquin are self-contempt, bitterness, self-punishment, masochism, self-deprecation, depression, and an overall lack of enthusiasm and vitality.[205] According to the author:

> French Canada – this tired and blasé culture – has been undergoing an endless winter for a long time now; each time the sunlight breaks through this cloudy ceiling that stands for the sky, the weak and disillusioned sick starts to hope for a new spring. French-Canadian culture, long agonising, is born again, then agonising again, living as it is an existence made of sudden bursts of life and impairments.[206]

[204] Hubert Aquin, "La fatigue culturelle du Canada français," ? My translation.
[205] Hubert Aquin, "La fatigue culturelle du Canada français," 314, 323.
[206] Hubert Aquin, "La fatigue culturelle du Canada français," 321. My translation.

In Aquin's analysis, the source of cultural fatigue is to be found in the subordination of the French Canadian nation to the more powerful and dominant English Canadian one and its subsequent inability to find within itself the meaning of its existence. Where Trudeau's critique appeals to transcending the smallness and particularism of French Canadian nationalism to join and embrace universal civilization, Aquin asserts the *independence* of French Canada. The notion of independence refers here to French Canada as a "global" culture, i.e. a culture that does not need to reach out and borrow external referents and codes for making sense of its existence. The author condemns his contemporaries' lack of political commitment to affirming the independence of French Canadian culture. In a passage reminiscent of Herder's thought, Aquin claims, "the French Canadian refuse its own centre of gravity, desperately searching elsewhere a focus and wandering in all sorts of maze."[207] For Aquin, this turning away from what he defines as a self-sufficient community of meaning is equivalent to "abolishing" or "dissolving" the nation.[208] It not only results in the nation becoming disheartened, but also in its de-politicization. If one accepts Aquin's interpretation, one must conclude with him that the consequences are dramatic for French Canadian culture. Decentered and uprooted, having lost touch with its globality for trying too hard to find a *raison d'être* that transcends its smallness and particularism, French Canadian culture is no longer sufficient to itself. Aquin's message is that only by cultivating a form of self-referential globality – or independence – can the culture fulfill itself and the individuals within it.

In the same piece, Aquin also tries to refute the accusation of essentialism launched by Trudeau against French Canadian nationalism, while insisting at the same time on the homogeneity of French Canadian culture. Refusing the idea that nationalist projects are

[207] Hubert Aquin, "La fatigue culturelle du Canada français," My translation.
[208] Hubert Aquin, "La fatigue culturelle du Canada français," 320.

necessarily ethnic, Aquin insists French Canadian culture is diverse and plural, with for sole "essential" feature a commitment to French language. Yet, this heterogeneity, he insists, is contained within a homogeneous whole. Aquin claims,

> It is a form of heterogeneity lived internally as homogeneity. An analysis may well reveal heterogeneity but the elements, no mater how heterogeneous, are apprehended by the community's consciousness as theirs, to the same extent as the most typically indigenous elements. A naturalization process has occurred, which belongs to the dialectics of appropriation.[209]

Globality and homogeneity, it seems, are one and the same thing for Aquin. He uses both terms to stress the self-referential quality of French Canadian culture, insisting that it can be at once, self-referential and open. However, the citation raises the question of how truly open is a culture, when there is such an emphasis put on *appropriating* and *naturalizing* heterogeneous elements to the point that their origins in a different cultural context is no longer perceptible or relevant. The term "indigenous" does not refer here to the indigeneity of Indigenous people(s), but to the self-proclaimed primacy of the Québécois people.

I argue that Aquin's argument for subjecting internal diversity to the imperative of homogeneity shows assimilative tendencies that are representative of a commonly held desire to limit the culture's vulnerability to difference. I also argue that Aquin's assertion of cultural wholeness, which I interpret him to say is a significant premise of self-determination, is consistent with a sovereignty-based approach that shows an effort to foreclose the transformative effect of difference. Overall, in my analysis, Aquin argues that transformation by way of interacting with difference is only legitimate if it goes in the sense of strengthening the unity and autonomy of the group.

An important passage with regard to the purpose of this dissertation is the one where Aquin suggests that Indigenous cultures too are meant to be global, denouncing their

[209] Hubert Aquin, ? My translation.

depoliticization and domestication by both Anglophones and Francophones. After accusing the federal government of reducing the French Canadian culture to its mere expression in the arts or the humanities and of compromising its globality as a result, Aquin goes on to denounce that the same has been done to Indigenous cultures. Writing as if the globality of Indigenous cultures belongs to the past, Aquin stresses how the seemingly benevolent recognition of particular indigenous cultural practices only comes into play once the link between those practices and the notion of globality is broken. A minority culture's globality is always considered a threat. This is evidenced in the following passage in which Aquin argues, "the more the attention of the winner-majority becomes particular and benevolent, the more it shows that it no longer fears signs of globality on the part of the minority culture."[210] This citation also shows how the vulnerability of the French and English majorities is involved in trying to deny Indigenous peoples the status of a global culture. To a certain extent, Aquin sees French Canadian and Indigenous cultures in the same light, that is, as cultures whose globality is threatened by the imposition of external referents.

Joseph Yvon Thériault

Another author to have addressed the issue of vulnerability is sociologist Joseph Yvon Thériault. Thériault characterizes French Canada as one of those "small nations" that he claims are defined not solely by their size in population or territory but by their precarious situation within a broader socio-political context. Thériault retraces the history of the notion of small nations in the work of authors such as Milan Kundera, who characterizes small nations as being condemned to being forever worried about their future because they are surrounded by the great European powers.[211]

[210] Hubert Aquin, "La fatigue culturelle du Canada français," 320. My translation.
[211] Joseph Yvon Thériault, *Petites sociétés et minorités nationales: Enjeux politiques et perspectives comparées*, ed. Jacques L. Boucher et Joseph Yvon Thériault (Ste-Foy, Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2005), xviii.

Thériault identifies as a defining feature of small nations "the awareness of the fragility of their destiny."[212] Drawing inspiration from Aquin, Thériault claims that this sentiment of fragility finds its origin in the obligation small societies are under to constantly justify their existence in reference to a universalizing system of thought that is external to them. In Thériault's work, the "smallness" of a nation is assessed in light of an alleged tension or contradiction between said nation and the universal movement of modern civilization. The latter compels in practice to political uniformity by destroying specific milieus of identification and belonging. According to Thériault, small nations are those nations where this process towards international uniformity is met with resistance. He conceives small nations as antithetical to the process of political modernization carried through the Hegelian state model and its ideal of abstract rationalism. The proposition is that, out of this specific experience of being a small society, a particular national consciousness develops, one that is at odd with the trajectory of universal modernization. Thériault draws from this opposition the following conclusion: "to form a small society is to constantly experience precarity."[213]

With regard to the specific case of Québec, Thériault is very critical of the socio-political legacy of the Quiet Revolution. For instance, he takes issue with the idea, very common in Québec nationalist literature, of a shift from an ethnic to a modern definition of the nation. Thériault interprets discourses on civic nationalism and the widespread embracing a typically modern understanding of the nation as an attempt to legitimize Québécois nationalism by inscribing it within the narrative of modern rationalism. While Thériault does not deny that a state-driven process of institutionalization and territorialisation has taken place as a result of the Quiet Revolution, he claims it has lead to a weakening of the French Canadian nation. More

[212] Joseph Yvon Thériault, *Petites sociétés et minorités nationales*, 2. My translation.
[213] Joseph Yvon Thériault, *Petites sociétés et minorités nationales*, 2. My translation.

specifically, he believes it has lead to a weakening of the nation's desire to leave its specific mark on history. Thériault claims the Quiet Revolution has resulted in the nation losing its intrinsic and unique "intentionality" and embracing instead a ready-made and universal model of self-determination.

Indeed, there is in Thériault's work a tendency to make self-determination and intentionality equivalent. For example, in the following passage, Thériault suggests that a self-reflection on the possibility of existing as a people or a nation is sufficient, in itself, to give substance to this existence. Thériault argues: "A people is nothing other than the trace left by the question of the people. Québec is nothing other than the questions of Québec."[214]

The role of intentionality in Thériault's nationalism must be interpreted in light of his argument about the necessity for a community of belonging to be at once autonomous and self-referential. Here, Thériault's work touches on the last of the five dimensions of vulnerability presented in chapter one. To reduce self-determination to self-referential intentionality is to suggest it could take form in a vacuum, without taking into account how a people's intentionality is always constructed through and disrupted by relations. It is to minimize the significance of external factors on our lives. Thériault is right to some extent: the history of Québec has been shaped by a strong desire to exist as a community. As I already explained in chapter one, intentionality is without question a crucial aspect of self-determination. But modern Western political thought has already given a lot of attention to the relationship between the will and self-determination, often at the expense of a more nuanced understanding of how self-determination depends more on our relations with others and the world than it does on pure intentionality.

[214] Joseph Yvon Thériault, *Critique de l'Américanité: Mémoire et démocratie au Québec* (Montréal: Québec Amérique, 2002), 319. My translation.

Ironically, Thériault's insistence on the meaning of intentionality has for effect of re-inscribing Québec within the horizon of the political modernity he claims to critique.

Along the same line, while he rightly identifies some theoretical limitations or contradictions involved in trying to foster belonging and identification through a modern and rationalist understanding of the nation-state, I claim his charge against contemporary Québec nationalism for being overly rationalist is mislead to the extent that it relies on the categorization of nationalist movements along the ethnic/civic antinomy. Modern forms of Québécois nationalism continue relying on symbolic references to a shared identity (French language, common history, maple syrup, hockey)[215], yet Thériault claims there is a need to redefine the nation around French-Canadian identity markers and turn away from the civic paradigm. As argued in chapter one of this dissertation, far from resolving the problem of vulnerability, such a proposition aimed at an idealized homogeneous nation where diversity is either assimilated, left out, or more realistically denied, simply displaces the problem.

Gérard Bouchard

In February 2008, in a context of collective uneasiness about the terms of integration of minorities into the Québécois society, which was spurred for the most part by the combined effect of the media and public rumour,[216] Prime Minister Jean Charest announced the creation of a commission chaired by Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor to study what constitute reasonable accommodations to difference in the context of Québécois society. More generally, the public hearings held by the commission became forums for members of the Québec society to express their views on the challenges and opportunities posed by the interaction of self-

[215] Gérard Bouchard, *L'interculturalisme*, 24-5.
[216] Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, *Fonder l'avenir, le temps de la conciliation* (Québec, Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles, 2008), 74-5.

determination and difference. Whether or not the public attending these assemblies were representative of Québec society as a whole remains a question. Yet, what cannot be denied is that a significant portion of the participants took these hearings as an opportunity to express feelings of vulnerability in the face of perceived demands for accommodation by cultural and religious minorities.

Following the publication of the report in which Bouchard and Taylor argued for a policy of interculturalism, Bouchard pushed the reflection on this notion further in a book of the same title a few years later. The book was also the occasion to further discuss the sentiment of vulnerability for which the debates on reasonable accommodations had become an outlet. Bouchard describes Québec as a plurinational state (due to the presence of Indigenous nations), whose minority status continue influencing the image its members have of themselves and their future. Bouchard explains, "as a minority people, the Francophone Québécois have never overcome a legitimate concern regarding their future, whether regarding their language, fundamental values, traditions, or institutions.[217] More than just a numerical reality, the minority status of Québec is interpreted by Bouchard as the result of a power dynamic originating in the British colonial regime and which continue keeping Québec in a position of weakness.[218] This, according to Bouchard, has resulted in a strong historical consciousness. Bouchard uses the expression "memory under tension." He describes it as a memoir which "is nourished mainly by the sentiment that the francophone majority still has unresolved issue with its colonial past and present."[219] Bouchard points to how this collective memory revolves around a conception of Québec as a nation "fragile and combatant."[220] The sentiment of vulnerability described here is

[217] Gérard Bouchard, *L'interculturalisme*, 20. My translation
[218] Gérard Bouchard, *L'interculturalisme*, 22.
[219] Gérard Bouchard, *L'interculturalisme*, 22. My translation
[220] Gérard Bouchard, *L'interculturalisme*, 102. My translation

rooted in a history of dual oppression, at the hands of the British Empire and, internally, at the ones of the powerful and authoritative Catholic clergy.[221] For Bouchard, this historical conscience often leads to a desire for redress or to this idea that collective emancipation remains an unfinished business in Québec.[222] This sentiment of vulnerability is accentuated by factors such as the current low fertility rate, immigration and the aging of the population.[223] Additionally, while globalization affects all the peoples of the world, he argues that small stateless nations like Québec have more to fear in terms of threats to their specific cultures and languages.[224] For Bouchard, the fact that Québec is not a sovereign state further contributes to the sentiment of vulnerability and unfulfillment. To summarize, Bouchard argues: "Québécois *francophonie* has to compose with constraints that are a source of vulnerability and which nourish a sentiment of insecurity. The concern for integration and unity is in a sense something that does not change in the history of this nation."[225]

Unlike the other authors whose works are discussed in this section, Bouchard does not seem to subscribe to the idea that there can be a way out of this vulnerability. Without taking position on the best way to resolve the problem of vulnerability, he invites his readers to acknowledge it as a factor affecting Québécois's perception of themselves and their relations with others. He articulates the notion of interculturalism around a majority/minorities dynamic, which, because it emphasizes power relations rather than a reified idea of the nation, presents a greater potential for transformation and change. Bouchard's perspective in this sense seems different from the ones of the rest of the authors of Québécois nationalism discussed in this chapter. That being said, his argument rests on a conception of the Québécois nation as a *de facto*

[221] Gérard Bouchard, *L'interculturalisme*, 22.
[222] Gérard Bouchard, *L'interculturalisme*, 22.
[223] Gérard Bouchard, *L'interculturalisme*, 28.
[224] Gérard Bouchard, *L'interculturalisme*, 24.
[225] Gérard Bouchard, *L'interculturalisme*, 65. My translation.

nation-state. The nation-state is where power relations between the majority and minorities play out. His argument thus ultimately contributes to a conception of Québec self-determination in the nation-state form.

The authors presented in this section have been selected because their works explicitly express the sentiment of vulnerability that has permeated Québec politics in the twentieth century. Their diagnosis of what makes the Québécois people vulnerable may vary, as well as the specific language they use to express this vulnerability or the solutions they propose. Nevertheless, their respective struggle with the problems of uncertainty and insecurity intersect to create a picture of the Québécois people as a people whose empowerment depends on achieving sovereign independence. These authors of Québec nationalism have this in common that their works all point to this conclusion that overcoming minority vulnerability is the main end goal of national self-determination. Their assessment of Québécois vulnerability tends to confirm and reinforce this notion, inherited from the modern tradition in modern Western political thought, and according to which a self-determined independent political subject, sovereign over itself, united and homogeneous represents the highest mark of *in*vulnerability. Self-determination as/through sovereignty is confirmed as the norm by which Québécois self-determination is deemed successful or not. The problem is that our efforts to constitute ourselves as an *in*vulnerable collective subject of self-determination are vain because of the impossibility to part with the influence of others on our lives. The self exists through relations of differentiation with what-is-different-from-self. This is a source of vulnerability, but also where the potential for self-determination lies. Among all the various sources and forms of difference with which Québécois self-determination intersects, connects, clashes, and flourishes, one poses a special challenge – the one of Indigenous nations and their self-determination. The territory

that is claimed as the nation-state territory is first and foremost Indigenous land. This poses a challenge to claims of sovereignty (in Québec and Canada) that has no equivalent.

As long as our understanding of self-determination will remain contained within the sovereignty paradigm, it will require marginalizing Indigenous peoples and overruling their self-determination. In the next section, I present a theoretical analysis of settler self-determination in Québec by anthropologist Sylvie Vincent. I find it revealing of the active denial of the presence of Indigenous peoples that is implied in nationalist self-determination as/through sovereignty.

On the marginalisation of Indigenous populations in Québécois political imagination

Vincent was one of the first to critically assess the representations of Indigenous peoples in Québec's culture and political imagination. A co-founder and former editor of *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, she is well-known for her groundbreaking book, *L'image de l'Amérindien dans les manuels scolaires du Québec,* a reflection on representations of Indigenous peoples in school textbooks. Vincent's work is famous for shining light on the ways by which the Québécois attempt to reduce the Indigenous people(s) to a mere imaginary "Other." This move, she claims, is fundamental to the process of Québécois identity construction. In this section I focus on a text from her titled "*De la nécessité des clôtures. Réflexion libre sur la marginalité des Amérindiens.*" I would translate the title as follows: "On the Need for Fences: Free Reflection on the Marginalisation of Indigenous Peoples." In this text, Vincent argues that the objectification of Indigenous peoples serves as a model for dealing with difference more broadly. Vincent claims: "Thanks to the image of Indigenous peoples that it keeps inventing, our society is teaching itself how to deal with alterity."[226]

[226] Sylvie Vincent, "De la nécessité des clôtures. Réflexion libre sur la marginalisation des Amérindiens," *Anthropologies et Sociétés* 10 no. 2 (1986): 75. My translation.

The first of two reasons behind my interest for this text is that, although Vincent does not refer to the notion of sovereignty *per se*, the specific relation to difference that she analyzes in her text belongs in my analysis to the conceptual domain of sovereignty. Vincent offers a reflection that is revealing of the type of politics of self-determination that unfolds when one, while confronted to the impossibility of living without the influence of difference in their life, persists in wanting an identity that is unilaterally determined. She offers insight into the treatment of difference that is implied and required by self-determination *as/through* sovereignty – or when self-determination is driven by an imagined need to construct 'fences' between self and others. The second reason is that Vincent reflects on this specific mode of relating to difference as it unfolds in the Québécois context *as a colonial context*. By offering an argument that resonates so strongly with the work of anti-colonial authors such as Fanon, Césaire, and Sartre, Vincent shows how the colonial relationship perverts the human necessity to be in relation with difference into a need for an object to exploit – in this case, a *distorted* and *reduced* Indigenous "Other."[227]

Vincent claims that at the heart of the way the Québécois envision their relation to Indigenous peoples lies a tension between two positions. On the one hand, there is the alleged theoretical necessity of the erasure (Vincent uses the word death) of the collective Indigenous "Other" which would give way to the unencumbered existence of the collective settler "Self." On the other one, there is the sustained need for the presence of this "Other,"[228] in order for the "Self" to recognize itself as such. As described by Vincent, erasure is achieved sometimes by projecting a seemingly infinite distance between "Self" and "Other," sometimes by reducing this distance to

[227] Vincent's reading and reinterpreting of French anti-colonial theory is interesting as it goes against a relatively important current in Québécois nationalism that was influential mainly in the 1970s and where people were reading this literature and recognizing themselves in the figure of the colonized, overlooking their role as colonizer. Vincent makes us shift our attention and see ourselves as colonizer to an instrumentalized Indigenous so-called "Other."
[228] Sylvie Vincent, "De la nécessité des clôtures." 76.

the point where nothing is left of the later. Those are two ways to defeat indigeneity: "to expedite it in a mystical world or assimilate it.[229]" Thirty years after Vincent's article was published, the same is observed by Pierrot-Ross Tremblay and Nawel Hamidi. The two authors claim there is a French-Canadian fear to pass for "savages." They explain this fear by what they call the "Durham complex" – a refusal to be essentialized and marginalised along the lines proposed by Durham' infamous report, which referred to French-Canadians as non-civilized people. Tremblay and Hamidi contrast this attitude with an equally widespread and problematic tendency to claim to have "Indian blood."[230]

According to Vincent's analysis, what is pursed either way is the death of the Indigenous "Other." I understand this as meaning to render indigeneity meaningless and assimilation total. Yet, as she argues, no matter how involved in contemplating the theoretical death of the "Other" settlers may be, they need an "Other" to exist in the world."[231] Moreover, she claims that in Québécois political imagination the Indigenous "Other" acts as a necessary point of reference, a "marker"[232] between "Self" and the infinity of the world. In other words, it is in reference to a (mis)constructed image of an Indigenous "Other" and by wanting to exercise sovereign power over it that the Québécois are locate and reassure themselves about their position in the world.

According to Vincent, settlers want to be able to look at Indigenous peoples as one looks into a mirror. They want to see themselves as the reversed image of indigeneity, but they also want to maintain indigeneity at a distance. The relationship must also be structured hierarchically, as a relationship among equal partners would most likely signify the disappearance of any

[229] Sylvie Vincent, "De la nécessité des clôtures." 76.
[230] Pierrot Ross-Tremblay and Nawell Hamidi, "Gamau : Confluence des personnes, des idées et des actions," *Perspectives d'avenir pour le Québec: Le regard des jeunes chercheurs*, ed. Simon Thibault and Magaly Brodeur (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec 2013): 234. 229-245.
[231] Sylvie Vincent, "De la nécessité des clôtures." 76. My translation.
[232] Sylvie Vincent, "De la nécessité des clôtures." 76.

distance between them. Ultimately, Vincent explains, this mirror-like relationship is legitimized through a classification system that "Self" constructs around itself for itself.[233] This is where we get to the crux of Vincent's reflection: the specific perspective on self-determination that lies at the heart of this relationship to indigeneity proceeds from a unilateral and self-arrogated power to order the world.[234] "Self" presents itself as the very center of a knowledge system aimed at its own centrality. Within that system, the relation that "Self" has to difference is always self-referential. Meanwhile, "Other" is being denied the possibility of having its own classification system. Vincent explains, "Self does not know the classification systems of the "Other," does not want to know them, except maybe as curiosities. "Self" is busy organizing the world according to its own system."[235] The specific terms of classification are not that important either; they change all the time. Some are worse than others in that they cast Indigenous people(s) in a very negative light, but even when the terms appear positive they come down to a play on the distance between "Self" and "Other." More than the specific terms of classification, what matters about this system is the triangulation process by which the distance between "Self" and "Other" serves to construct knowledge of the world. And knowledge constructed through this process always depends on "Self" being the centre of it all.

From the perspective of this dissertation, what Vincent describes is the resorting to classification as a way to create conditions of certainty and security for the benefit of the settler majority. This is a system aimed at making the collective Québécois "Self" into a "solid block, indivisible and confident."[236] Vincent's analysis probes into a process of self-determination as/through sovereignty that is aimed at building Québécois identity as an *invulnerable* block. She

[233] Sylvie Vincent, "De la nécessité des clôtures." 79.
[234] Sylvie Vincent, "De la nécessité des clôtures." 79.
[235] Sylvie Vincent, "De la nécessité des clôtures." 78. My translation.
[236] Sylvie Vincent, "De la nécessité des clôtures." 81. My translation.

insists: "to render "Other" marginal is not a game. For "Self" it is a survival strategy."[237] I recall that, for Vincent, Québécois are learning how to interact with difference through their relationship with Indigenous people(s). This "auto-pedagogy,"[238] she further explains, cannot tolerate any uncertainty, middle-ground solutions, or nuances.[239]

Dating back to 1986, Vincent's analysis has since then been supported by the work of different authors, who too have researched and reflected on Indigenous/non-indigenous relations in Québec. For example, an analysis written by Pierre Trudel in the aftermath of the Oka standoff, gives Vincent's theoretical framework a down-to-earth dimension when he claims, "the goal pursued by people who engage in discourses that negate the presence of the "Other" is clear: no need to negotiate with what does not exist."[240] Trudel claims the Québec nationalist discourse employs various startegies of negation of the existence of Indigenous populations to consolidate Québécois's identity,[241] such as the use of physical stereotypes; the negation of history and cultural and political identity of Indigenous peoples, the negation of their territorial rights. Trudel insists on a very important point: what is at stake in such dismissing of Indigenous existence is the possibility of gaining control of the territory. Trudel claims, "there is no doubt that the territory constitutes one of the most important things over which the power to order the world is exercised."[242] Trudel's reading of Vincent confirms that what settlers seek through this one-way relationship is to constitute themselves as a sovereign collective subject with power over a given territory. In a recent book, Joëlle Gardette argues that, since the moment of contact, relations between settlers of French descent and Innu people have been predominantly characterized by a

[237] Sylvie Vincent, "De la nécessité des clôtures." 81. My translation.
[238] Sylvie Vincent, "De la nécessité des clôtures." ? My translation.
[239] Sylvie Vincent, "De la nécessité des clôtures." 81. My translation.
[240] Pierre Trudel, "De la négation de l'Autre dans les discours nationalistes des Québécois et des Autochtones," *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 25, no. 4 (1995): 53. My translation.
[241] Pierre Trudel, "De la négation de l'Autre," 54.
[242] Pierre Trudel, "De la négation de l'Autre," ?

"dialectics of alterity." Gardette defines this dialectics as one in which different representations of Indigenous people(s) are used to mark a distance between settlers and Indigenous populations. This is a process she further describes as relying on "une altérité de mise à distance."[243] She draws her conclusions from analyzing a vast and eclectic body of works, ranging from primary historical sources to recent film productions and newspaper articles, among others. Gardette advocates instead for a "dialectic of difference", which relies on a certain notion of cultural relativism, intercultural dialogue, as well as a decentering of the "Self."[244]

Another argument supporting Vincent's analysis is found in work resulting from the collaboration between anthropologists Sylvie Poirier and Laurent Jérôme and the *Société d'histoire atikamekw* (*Nehirowisiw Kitci Atisokan*)[245]. The authors present the genealogy of a widespread misinterpretation of historical colonial archives that has lead to the conclusion, supported by many studies published in the 1980s and 1990s, that the Atikamekw and Innu peoples had been eradicated towards the end of the seventeenth century.[246] The authors claim the Government of Québec and Hydro-Québec were behind the studies endorsing such distorted reading of history. They explain, "the hidden goal was to try to deny the existence of Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok and, therefore, deny the legitimacy of territorial claim."[247] They also point to the fact that on March 12, 1996 and October 29, 2002 Radio-Canada became complicit of this neo-colonial strategy by broadcasting television coverage confirming the disappearance of

[243] Joëlle Gardette, *Les Innus et les Euro-Canadiens : dialogue des cultures et rapport à l'Autre à travers le temps (XVII^{e} – XX^{e} siècles)* (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2008).
[244] Joëlle Gardette, *Les Innus et les Euro-Canadiens*, 192.
[245] Officially recognized by the *Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw* since 2000, the Société d'histoire Atikamekw is composed of autodidact atikamekw researchers.
[246] Sylvie Poirier, Laurent Jérôme and the Société d'histoire Atikamekw (*Nehirowisiw Kitci Atisokan*), "Les Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. Territorialités et savoirs," *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* 44, no. 1 (2014): 4.
[247] Sylvie Poirier, Laurent Jérôme and the Société d'histoire Atikamekw (*Nehirowisiw Kitci Atisokan*), "Les Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. Territorialités et savoirs," 4. My translation.

Atikamekw people.[248] As Poirier, Jérôme and the *Société d'histoire atikamekw* (*Nehirowisiw Kitci Atisokan*) explain, a simple way of avoiding such a crude mistake would have been to consult work based on Atikamekw oral history, or even better, Atikamekw people themselves. The collective failure of historians to properly document the role and contributions of Indigenous peoples in Québécois history hardly needs further demonstration. As René Boudreault argues, "*Les Autochtones sont des figurants utiles ou démoniaques au début de notre histoire, ils sont souvent cités ensuite* à titre de faire-valoir des héros euro-canadiens imagines et forges par les historiens ; quand on n'a plus besoin d'eux, ils disparaissent inopinément dans la poussière de nos livres d'histoire."[249]

To be a nation-state

Today there is a strong consensus among people living in Québec that they form a nation in control of a state. In this sense, it can be argued that the nation-state of Québec is what the Québécois *identify* with and that it forms the core of Québécois self-determination. As I mentioned in the introduction, this vision of Québec as a nation-state depends on the presence of three things: a national cultural identity based on a common history and language, modern state institutions, and conceiving the land as a legally enclosed territorial entity. Regardless of their different political views and ideologies, including on what is often referred to as the "national question," people living in Québec tend to agree that they form a distinct nation and to view the state of Québec as the main legitimate actor of self-determination. Indeed, the state is generally perceived as being at once the norm and primary agent of self-determination. People also tend to agree that Québécois self-determination involves the entirety of the territory known as Québec

[248] Sylvie Poirier, Laurent Jérôme and the Société d'histoire Atikamekw (*Nehirowisiw Kitci Atisokan*), "Les Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. Territorialités et savoirs," 4.
[249] René Boudreault, *Du mépris au respect mutuel: clefs d'interprétation des enjeux autochtones au Québec et au Canada* (Montréal: Les Éditions Écosociété, 2003), 31.

and that the provincial government is the only fiduciary of this territory in the name of the common good.[250]

This consensus is the result of the nation-building movement that started with the Quiet Revolution, and which sought to transcend the minority status of French-Canadians through the constitution of a national majority in control of all the social, political, and economic means necessary to its independence. People living in Québec who used to identify as French-Canadians started developing a new understanding of themselves as a political community and began identifying with being Québécois around the time of the Quiet Revolution. More than a simple change of designation, that was the beginning of a new state-based, nationalist movement of self-determination regulated by the logic of sovereignty. National self-determination was and continues to be seen as the way to break free from various forms of external and internal oppression – as a way to break free from vulnerability. Assumptions, discourses, and practices of sovereignty are self-referential; their object is the Québécois nation-state. Notions of what Québec is and what it means to be Québécois have gone through many transformations since then and remain forever a subject of debates, but these are always grounded in continuity with the nationalist and statist movement that emerged around the time of the Quiet Revolution.

The Quiet Revolution brought many undeniably progressive and positive changes to the socio-political landscape of Québec. For example, it remains a reference point for the development of the welfare state in Québec. Lead by the idea that implementing greater social justice through a more systematic and accessible distribution of governmental services would be an impetus to the modernization of the economy, the Liberal government of Jean Lesage made important changes to the education system and the regime of social security in the province. The

[250] Frédéric Lasserre and Aline Lechaume, eds., *Le territoire pensé: Géographie des représentations territoriales* (Ste-Foy: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2003), 14.

subsequent Union Nationale and Parti Québécois governments continued with those reforms, effectively transforming the state into the primary actor of social justice. The contribution of social movements was also an important factor of change during that time. For example, labour movements became increasingly active around and after the time of the Quiet Revolution, which also saw the development of a strong feminist movement of emancipation that left a profound and durable mark on Québécois. Finally, even when refusing to subscribe to any clear cut version of the ethnic/civic dichotomy in assessing nationalist movements, it can hardly be denied that going from defining membership to the nation in terms that were primarily ethnic to defining it in reference to a liberal citizenship regime of rights has furthered the social and cultural diversity of Québec society. A strong liberal ethos of equality sustained all these changes – an ethos that remains very present in Québec today.[251]

At a deeper level, however, what was at stake in the socio-political movement of the Quiet Revolution were a desire for emancipation from the minority status and the constitution of a majority. Fifteen years ago Michel Sarra-Bournet asked: "Is it too early to affirm today that Québec has entered in a phase of maturity? That the Québécois nationalists are formulating a discourse that is the one of a majority? Is this possible in a country that is not sovereign?"[252] Sarra-Bournet was expressing then a common idea, the influence of which has not waned since: a people constituting itself as a majority nation in control of a state represents the maturity of self-determination. He asks: is Québec there yet?, wondering if such a thing is possible in the absence of a duly recognized sovereign state status under international law. As the question raised by Sarra-Bournet implies, the consolidation of the nation-state of Québec is often

[251] Alain G. Gagnon, *Minority Nations in the Age of Uncertainty: New Paths to National Emancipation and Empowerment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 40.
[252] Michel Sarra-Bournet, "Avant-Propos," in *Les nationalismes au Québec du XIXe au XXIe siècle*, ed. Michel Sarra-Bournet and Jocelyn Saint-Pierre (Saint-Nicolas: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2001), 2. My translation.

interpreted as a sign that the Québécois people is moving towards political maturity. Indeed, the nation-state is normalized as the most advanced and legitimate form of self-determination to such an extent that it is being made equivalent to political maturity. What is suggested is that feelings of uncertainty and insecurity that are exacerbated by the minority status can be overcome by embracing a model that forms the most enduring norm of self-determination in political modernity, the one of the nation-state.

In my analysis, however, what is truly pursued is the illusion of invulnerability that *normalcy*, not maturity, brings. From this perspective, the Québécois people is attempting to constitute itself as an *in*vulnerable subject of self-determination, because to be *in*vulnerable is presented as the maturity of nations in modern political times. In other words, maturity seems like a false argument: what is truly sought is sovereignty as political normalcy and remedy against vulnerability. The problem is that, as I have demonstrated in chapter one, this is always done at the expense of others with whom we share the world and whose vulnerability is exacerbated by our quest to be invulnerable. In the case of Québec, the ones who are primarily impacted are Indigenous peoples whose own self-determination stands in opposition to claims of state sovereignty. Québécois nation-state building movement has had important consequences for Indigenous peoples and Indigenous/non-indigenous relations. It is without a surprise that it is met with Indigenous resistance.

According to Claude Gélinas, up until 1960s, interactions between the provincial government of Québec and Indigenous people were minimal.[253] As Gélinas explains, until 1960 Indigenous peoples were not considered citizens of Québec, the government of Québec did not consider looking after the interests of Indigenous people to be one of its responsibilities.[254] That

[253] Claude Gélinas, *Les Autochtones dans le Québec post-confédéral, 1867-1960* (Québec: Septentrion, 2007), 17-8.
[254] Claude Gélinas, *Les Autochtones dans le Québec post-confédéral*, 30.

responsibility was seen to be of the federal government and carried through the *Indian Act*. As a consequence, Indigenous people(s) were not fully integrated into the legal framework of the province. Their integration into the provincial legal framework started in 1963, when the government created inside the ministry of natural resources a *Direction générale du Nouveau-Québec*, charged with delivering services to the Cree and Inuit populations. The fact that relations with Indigenous nations were mediated through this particular ministry proves that the intention behind wanting to develop those relations was lead primarily by a concern for exploiting natural resources. Without a surprise, the interest for developing ties with Indigenous people independently from the federal government and eventually achieving legal certainty for the purpose of economic development grew significantly from the moment a majority of Québécois no longer saw themselves as a minority inside Canada, but as a majority inside Québec. From that moment, the fact that Indigenous people(s) were not specifically integrated to the legal framework of the province and its nascent citizenship regime was considered an anomaly. In 1978, René Lévesque transformed the Direction générale du Nouveau-Québec into the *Secrétariat des activités gouvernementales en milieu amérindien et inuit* (SAGMAI) as a division of the Executive Council. It then became the *Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones* in 1987. Self-determination as/through sovereignty, in the form of the nation-state requires occupying the territory effectively and exercising state authority over everyone living on that territory, without exception. With the instauration of a new liberal citizenship regime rooted in a territorial conception of the nation, Québec could no longer ignore the presence of Indigenous populations on its territory.

It is tempting to explain the increased recognition of Indigenous people(s) by the government and people of Québec with reference to the fact that a territorial definition of the

nation allows for a more diverse understanding of it. Indeed, Québec's nationalism is often said to have transformed from a movement that was defensive and protective – "folded unto itself" as the common saying goes in French – into one that is now affirmative, positive, and more open. It is certainly the case that, because of its reliance on territoriality, the understanding of the nation that developed in relation to the Quiet Revolution lead to a democratic impulse[255] and offers now more possibility for accommodating diversity. With identity markers losing importance in determining membership to the nation and being replaced instead by residency on the territory, there is room within the nation of Québec for recognizing Indigenous groups, among other cultural and immigrant minorities. I am not disputing the general principle.

However, the theory of the progressiveness of territorial nationalism does not hold when considering that in the last few decades Indigenous peoples living in Québec have become more and more active in questioning the terms of Québécois self-determination. As Trudel argues, the emergence of this very territorial definition of the nation is the source of the clash between Indigenous and Québécois self-determination.[256] In theory, even indigeneity is no longer an obstacle to being part of the nation, it did not lead to better recognition for Indigenous people(s). Indigenous peoples are not a numerical minority like others. This may seem like an obvious thing to say, but this is not a reality that civic nationalism can easily address, at least not without qualification. Indigeneity poses a direct and profound challenge to the type of territoriality implied in self-determination in the nation-state form and its related aspirations to sovereignty.[257]

One example of a movement of resistance from Indigenous peoples happened in the early seventies when the Cree and Inuit communities living in the James Bay area decided to resist the unilateral imposition of the James Bay hydroelectric project and to remind the governments of

[255] Michel Sarra-Bournet, "Avant-Propos," in *Les nationalismes au Québec du XIXe au XXIe siècle*, 2.
[256] Pierre Trudel, "De la négation de l'Autre," 228.
[257] Pierre Trudel, "De la négation de l'Autre," 228.

Québec and Canada of the obligation to obtain consent from the communities holding Aboriginal rights and title. In Québec like in the rest of Canada, Aboriginal rights and title remain alive wherever they are not otherwise extinguished. At the time, this included the significant portion of the territory of Québec that was not covered by the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The requirement of negotiating their extinguishment is clearly stated in the federal and provincial laws officialising the expansions of the boundaries of Québec that took place in 1898 and 1912, but the government of Québec neglected to consult the local populations, until it met Indigenous resistance.[258] This was a movement to stop the organized devastation of the land by Hydro-Québec and an assertion of rights, but also, I argue, a movement of resistance against a specific project of national self-determination. From the beginning, the provincial government intended to exploit the James Bay hydroelectric project for its strong nation-building potential. The project was presented as a landmark of the development of the North, and its nation-building potential was to be captured and represented by the slogan "*Maîtres chez nous*." The phrase remains to this day a symbol of the political transformation that occurred as a result of the Quiet Revolution and the shift to self-determination as/through sovereignty. But it did not go as planned after the Cree and Inuit turned to the courts to force the two levels of government to negotiate with them. They were successful in obtaining an injunction granted by Judge Albert Malouf on November 15, 1973 to stall the project until a treaty would be negotiated. The injunction was only short lived as the Québec Court of Appeal allowed the project to go ahead during the negotiations. This leaves no doubt that the governments did not care to negotiate in good faith with the communities whose ways of life were going to be directly impacted by the project. On November 11, 1975, the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement was nevertheless adopted

[258] René Boudreault, *Du mépris au respect mutuel: clefs d'interprétation des enjeux autochtones au Québec et au Canada* (Montréal: Les Éditions Écosociété, 2003), 25.

and became the first Canadian modern treaty. Today, there is no consensus on the value of this agreement for supporting Cree and Inuit self-determination. It is subject to different interpretations and remains contested.[259] In spite of ongoing debates, what cannot be denied is that the agreement resulted from Cree and Inuit's resistance to the state's ambition to unilaterally "develop" the territory for the alleged common good of the nation. Indigenous resistance disrupted the assumptions of territorial control and integrity on which Québécois nation-state building relies. The potential for a clash between Indigenous and Québécois self-determination that was revealed around the issue of the James Bay hydroelectric project would only get exacerbated by the heated constitutional debates that took in Canada place from the early eighties until the mid-nineties.

Around the same time, An Antane Kapesh published her bilingual Innu-French book *Je suis une maudite sauvagess/Eukuan nin matshimanitu innu-iskueu,* in which she accuses white settlers of French descent to have dishonestly manoeuvre to destroy her people's attachment to the land in order to facilitate its appropriation for the sake of economic development.[260] Speaking from personal experience, Kapesh points to an array of injustices and impositions experienced by her community – restrictions on hunting and fishing, forced schooling, unlawful incarceration, racial profiling, settlement, wage labour and economic dependency – as so many colonial practices aimed at the eradication of her culture and ways of life. As Amélie-Anne Mailhot argues, the targets of Kapesh's critique – settler practices around the extraction of natural resources and the implementation of a legal regime of private property – form the cornerstone of a much broader project, which is the imposition of the structure of sovereignty over innu

[259] Alain G.-Gagnon and Guy Rocher, eds. *Regards sur la Convention de la Baie James et du Nord québécois* (Montréal, Québec-Amérique, 2002).
[260] An Antane Kapesh, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse/Eukuan nin matshimanitu innu-iskueu* (Ottawa: Les Éditions Leméac Inc., 1976), 14-27.

territory.[261] The way Kapesh sees it, "White" people want to rule over innu territory as masters.[262] According to Mailhot's analysis, it is not so much the notion of whiteness that is the main target of Kapesh's critique but rather a very specific way of living in the world.[263] Mailhot explains, "The white man does not inhabit the territory (he does not know it, does not know the ones who inhabit it, and cannot live from it), he inhabits symbolic representations and speculative which he perpetuates (the state, capital)."[264] I agree with Mailhot's analysis. Aside from the fact that the book allows for the expression of Kapesh first-hand experience of colonialism (which in itself is sufficient reason for reading it), it is important because it shows how settler's self-determination as/through sovereignty depends on replacing an Indigenous relationship with the land with one that sustains this specific model of self-determination. Ultimately, Kapesh's book ends with a warning: "I, myself, I believe that today it is not for us but for the white man to remain quiet here on our territory. It is not for the white man to govern on our territory. And if the white man does not want to understand that it is he who needs to keep quiet, he should go back where he came from."[265]

The politics around the patriation of the Constitution in 1982, the subsequent rounds of constitutional negotiations, and the first of two referendums on sovereignty have further complicated Indigenous/non-indigenous relations in Québec. This is a context in which Indigenous and Québécois' interests, as well as their respective movements of self-determination, have often been placed in opposition to each other. In what can be interpreted as an attempt to, first, address the growing tensions between the Québécois state and Indigenous populations and,

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[261] Amélie-Anne Mailhot, "La perspective de l'habitation politique dans *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse/Eukuan nin matshimanitu innu-iskueu* d'An Antane Kapesh," *Recherches féministes* 30, no. 1 (2017): 37.
[262] An Antane Kapesh, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*, 29.
[263] Amélie-Anne Mailhot, "La perspective de l'habitation politique dans *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*, 30.
[264] Amélie-Anne Mailhot, "La perspective de l'habitation politique dans *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*, 30. My translation.
[265] An Antane Kapesh, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*, 237. My translation.

second, foster Québec's status as a nation, the PQ government of René Lévesque initiated an important change of approach and sought to recognize Indigenous self-determination. In 1983, the members of his Cabinet adopted a motion now commonly known as the *15 principles de 1983*, which recognize, among other things, that Indigenous peoples form distinct nations inside Québec.[266] The motion, however, specifies that the rights hereby recognized are *not* equivalent to a right of sovereignty and cannot be interpreted as compromising Québec's territorial integrity.[267] More precisely, as Boudreault points out, 7 of the 15 principles assert that Indigenous rights can only be exercised within the framework of Québec legislation.[268]

A couple of years later, the government adopted an official policy for negotiating nation-to-nation with Indigenous peoples.[269] This policy resulted from the passing of two resolutions by the National Assembly of Québec. On March 20, 1985 a motion on the recognition of ten Indigenous nations (Abenaki, Algonquin, *Atikamekw,* Cree, Huron, Mi'kmaq, Mohawk, Innu, Naskapi, and Inuit[270]) was adopted. On May 30, 1989 a second motion was adopted to add the Malecite nation to the list of recognized nations.[271] According to Émilie Guilbeault-Cayer, René

[266] Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones, Mission and orientations of the Secrétariat, http://www.autochtones.gouv.qc.ca/secretariat/mission_secretariat_en.htm (accessed 14 January 2019).
[267] Denis Bouchard, Éric Cardinal, and Ghislain Picard, *De Kebec à Québec: Cinq siècle d'échange entre nous* (Montréal: Les Éditions des Intouchables, 2008), 79.
[268] René Boudreault, *Du mépris au respect mutuel*, 57.
[269] Émilie Guilbeault-Cayer, "L'État québécois et la crise d'Oka de 1990: mutations des politiques en matière de gestion des revendications amérindiennes, 1985-2001," (MA thesis, Université Laval, 2008), 19-26.
[270] The spelling used here is consistent with the one contained in the text of the motion and may not be consistent with the spelling, or even the names, that members of each of these communities would use.
[271] The motions state the principles that the government of Québec is expected to apply in its relations with the Indigenous nations living in the province. The motions recognize these nations' ancestral rights, as well as the ones listed in the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, and press the Government of Québec to conclude agreements in the fields of autonomy, culture, language, tradition, possession, territorial control, traditional activities, shared resource management, and economic development. See Camil Girard and Carl Brisson, *Nistassinan-Notre Terre: Alliances et souveraineté partagée du peuple innu au Québec, des premiers contacts à nos jours* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2014), 140.

Lévesque intended for the 15 principles and two resolutions to become the new foundations for the renewal of Indigenous/non-indigenous relations in Québec.[272]

While the National Assembly's position for negotiating nation-to-nation represents an important development towards establishing a postcolonial relationship with Indigenous peoples, the 15 principles and two resolutions have fallen short when it comes to concrete transformation of the power relations between Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Québec.[273] As Geneviève Nootens and Mathieu Cook explain, referring to an analysis by Stephen Tierney, when the self-determination of a minority nation is subordinate to the decisions of a majority nation in control of state institutions and when those institutions have for effect to crystallize the dominant position of the majority, the two parties cannot be said to be equal.[274] The expression of a desire to negotiate as equal nations is to be celebrated, but it is important to recognize that, repeatedly, the government of Québec has not only failed to implement this principle, but has made a mockery of it.

The history of Québec presents too many examples of open conflicts with Indigenous communities when they try to resist the infringement of Indigenous self-determination and its subsuming under nation-state self-determination. For example, in 1981 the government of Québec sent 550 officers from the Sûreté du Québec in Listuguj, where the Mi'kmaq population had erected road blockades to protest governmental restrictions against salmon fishing. After a ten-day standoff the government ordered the repression of the movement, which the SQ resorted to do with the use of rubber bullets and tear gaz.[275] Another, often-cited yet unavoidable,

[272] Émilie Guilbeault-Cayer, "L'État québécois et la crise d'Oka," 29.
[273] Camil Girard and Carl Brisson, *Nistassinan-Notre Terre*, 140-1.
[274] Geneviève Nootens and Mathieu Cook, "Introduction. Les défis de la coexistence dans les sociétés plurinationales," *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec*. 43, no. 1 (2013): 4.
[275] Éric Cardinal, "Les leçons de l'Histoire," 76. See also *Incident at Restigouche* Directed by Alanis Obomsawin (ONF, 1984).

example is the Oka standoff of 1990 (also known as the Oka crisis), when the three Mohawk communities of Kanesatake, Kahnawake, and Akwasasne decided to stop the Oka municipality's project to expand a golf course over a pine forest and an ancestral burial site the Mohawk nation considers to be sacred and part of its unceded traditional land. The conflict finds its origins in a more than 270 years long conflict regarding land title over Lake of Two Mountains territory. Despite Québec and Ottawa's refusal to acknowledge the political nature of the conflict, choosing instead to dismiss the Mohawk protestors and warriors as criminals, the violence of the repression used against them suggests they fully recognized the protest for what it was: a contestation of state authority.[276] Thus, in spite of Québec government's policy to negotiate nation-to-nation and an overall growing sensitivity regarding the need to pluralize our understanding of the nation-state, this has not resulted in a truly postcolonial acceptance of Indigenous self-determination in Québec.[277] The events in Restigouche may not have had the same impact in the media than the ones in Oka, but in both cases the attitude of the government of Québec has had lasting consequences on its relations with Indigenous communities.

Moreover, even in times of relative peace when there are no open conflicts, the general attitude of the government of Québec and the majority population is at best indifferent with regards to Indigenous land claims. The ideal of territorial integrity is of absolute importance to a great number of people in Québec. According to Éric Cardinal, the majority population in Québec remains mind-closed on the topic of Indigenous rights and perceives their territorial claims as a threat to [Québec's] autonomy.[278] Again, regardless of their orientation on the question of whether or not they should pursue the creation of an independent state under

[276] Martin J. Morris, "Overcoming the Barricades: The Crisis at Oka as a Case Study in Political Communication," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 30, Issue 2 (1995).
[277] Daniel Salée, "L'évolution des rapports politiques depuis la crise d'Oka," in *Les Autochtones et le Québec: Des premiers contacts au Plan Nord*, Alain Beaulieu, Stéphan Gervais et Martin Papillon (Montréal: PUM, 2013), 328.
[278] Éric Cardinal, "Les leçons de l'Histoire," 81.

international law, people in Québec are very attached to the integrity of the territory by which they form a majority. This is possibly the issue about which they feel the most vulnerable with regards to their relations with Indigenous peoples. The backlash against the "*approche commune*"[279] of 2000 as reported by Cardinal is a good example of this vulnerability. The purpose of this important agreement between the representatives of Canada, Québec, and the tribal council of Mamuitun (representing the communities of Matimekush-Lac John, Pessamit, Essipit et Mashteuiatsh) is to establish the foundations upon which the negotiation of a new treaty will take place. While the agreement represents an important shift of attitude on the part of the governments, it was highly criticized by members of local communities.[280] Some critiques point to the fact that the agreement represents only a small concession to a balance of power that privileges non-indigenous governments and that the principle of territorial integrity forecloses the possibilities for a new arrangement for land sharing.[281] Nevertheless, the non-indigenous local populations had to be reassured that the principle of territorial integrity would not be challenged by the new treaty to be.

Another example of the vulnerability felt around the issue of the territory is provided in a published dialogue between the Assembly of First Nations' Regional Chief for Québec and Labrador Ghislain Picard and the actor Denis Bouchard. According to Cardinal, who organized and took part to their meeting, the purpose for their conversation is to discuss Indigenous/non-indigenous relations in Québec. Bouchard, a Québec history passionate and convinced nationalist brings up the land question at the very outset of their conversation: "The big problem has to do

[279] The official title of the agreement that was first presented to the public as the "approche commune" is Agreement-in-Principle of General Nature between the First Nations of Mamuitun and Nutashkuan and the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada.
[280] Éric Cardinal, "Les leçons de l'Histoire," 109.
[281] Étienne Rivard, "L'Approche commune ou l'irrésistible élan vers une définition interethnique de la planification térritoriale?" *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 43, no. 1 (2013): 28.

with the territory. Today the whole of the territory is contested. Even the Mohawks, who live South of Montreal are claiming the island of Montreal. What are we supposed to do, us the Whites, we go back to Normandy? He asks jokingly."[282] Despite his joking, Bouchard makes it clear that the land question represents a "big problem," and in doing so he voices a concern shared by many non-indigenous people. Unfortunately, Picard is left with no choice but to try to educate his interlocutor on why the issue of the land is so important for Indigenous peoples.

The way the Québécois conceive their "right" to the territory of Québec today is grounded in the old discovery legal doctrine, also known as *terra nullius* doctrine.[283] According to this theory, Europeans had a right to take possession of a land if they judged that the people living on it was not exploiting or developing it to its full potential. European powers would consider the presence of Indigenous populations irrelevant and call their own arrival to any territory that was unknown to them a "discovery." In practice, the Europeans acknowledged that Indigenous peoples formed autonomous nations, as proven by the various alliances and treaties that were created from the early moments of the colonisation of North America. But as Renée Dupuis explains, confident in the legal value of the *terra nullius* doctrine, "European Crowns decided that the juridical orders of Indigenous peoples was no obstacle to the establishment of their own sovereignty."[284] The type of territoriality on which contemporary Québécois self-determination depends is thus consistent with nation-state territorialisation inherited from the combined effect of terra nullius theory and Westphalian sovereignty. The currently hegemonic approach to territorialisation in Québec is also consistent with the one of the Canadian state. This

[282] Éric Cardinal, "Les leçons de l'Histoire," 17. My translation.
[283] André Émond, "Les mutations de la "découverte" ou l'émergence des droits des peuples autochtones en droit colonial britannique," in Ghislain Otis (ed.), *Droit, territoire et gouvernance des peuples autochtones* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2004), 16-7.
[284] Renée Dupuis, "Les origines et les justifications des traités conclu entre la Couronne et les peuples autochtones au Canada," in Ghislain Otis (dir.), *Droit, territoire et gouvernance des peuples autochtones* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2004), 35. My translation.

is what Indigenous peoples are up against when exercising self-determination. Meanwhile, standards of universality, totality, exclusivity, and boundedness that define nation-state territorialisation remain unchallenged as a defining feature of a progressive present.

As Eva Mackey argues, settler Canadians' attitude towards Indigenous land rights and Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations is predominantly influenced by an assumed certainty regarding their own right to control the state and the land – an assumption that is rooted in the doctrine of terra nullius. She further argues, "Western philosophy, law, and land claims policy have all sought, in distinct and flexible ways, to attain certainty in "settled expectations" for settler projects."[285] While Mackey's research is located in Ontario, it serves to exemplify how settlers' desire for certainty operates at the expense of Indigenous self-determination. As she explains, "the Crown and the nation-state's legitimacy are based on the legal assumption (or as I call it, the "fantasy of entitlement") that their sovereignty is necessarily superior, stronger, and deeper than any claims of Indigenous people because *underlying title* belongs to the Crown."[286] I argue that the description Mackey gives of settler certainty in Canada and its reliance on the Crown is analogous to the assumptions behind Québécois self-determination's reliance on sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As some authors have argued, however, Indigenous/non-indigenous relations on the land that is now called Québec have never been entirely dictated by the *terra nullius* doctrine, just like Westphalian sovereignty can never been achieved completely. And there is something to be said about the fact that non-indigenous people seem to now be unaware of that. Claims of autonomy, absoluteness, exclusivity, universality, boundedness, and integrity that are implied by nation-state territoriality and self-determination as/through sovereignty more broadly, rely on this notion

[285] Eva Mackey, *Unsettled Expectations: Uncertainty*, 9.
[286] Eva Mackey, *Unsettled Expectations: Uncertainty*, 9.

that the prior presence of Indigenous populations is irrelevant. Yet, these claims remain always contested, as the reality of co-existence is always more complex than what theories of self-determination based on sovereignty suggest. From the very beginning of the French presence in North America, the doctrine of *terra nullius* amounted to little more than a form of legal rhetoric, as in reality the prior presence of Indigenous peoples on the land called for a politics of accommodation, alliances, and treaties.[287] I will discuss this point in more detail in chapter five.

Self-determination as/through sovereignty is not limited to the physicality of a specific type of territorialisation. The meaning that is attributed to the territorial integrity of the nation-state extends beyond the material reality of the territory and plays a symbolic role in sovereignty-based self-determination. The reason why I give the question of territorialisation this much attention is because, as I explained in the introduction, sharing the land represents the main challenge and point of conflict in Indigenous/non-indigenous relations. It allows for addressing what is most crucially at stake when Indigenous and non-indigenous self-determinations clash. This does not mean that the problems found in the logic of sovereignty are limited to a specific type of territorialisation. The principle of territorial integrity is a matter of exercising power over the land and its natural resources and serves as a framework for exercising power over everyone living on that territory through the law. But what is also important to consider is how territorial integrity serves as a symbol of the projected autonomy, absoluteness, exclusivity, universality, boundedness, and integrity of the collective self, and it is presented as contributing to certainty, security and emancipation from vulnerability. So, if territorial nationalism can accommodate a more diverse composition of the nation, it is based on the integrity of a given territory and its

[287] Camil Girard and Carl Brisson, *Nistassinan-Notre Terre*, 2-3. See also Andrée Lajoie, Jean-Maurice Brisson, Sylvio Normand and Alain Bissonnette, *Le statut juridique des peuples autochtones au Québec et le pluralisme* (Cowansville: Les éditions Yvon Blais inc, 1996), 35.

exclusive association with the state. This type of relationship with the land is necessarily hierarchical.

In order to fully appreciate what is at stake in the examples of indigenous resistance cited above, one needs to accept indigeneity as a different type of relationship to the land. Contrary to what is consistent with the sovereignty-based model as it developed through political modernity, Indigenous self-determination does not occur through exercising of power over the land, but through living in balance with it and all the living beings who inhabit it. As Kiera Ladner argues, "Indigenous, non-state political traditions are about being part of the natural world and not claiming dominion over "it" nor over any of the beings (human or non-human) living within a local ecological order."[288] From an indigenous perspective, the land is not an inanimate thing waiting to be turned into private property; it has agency. As Starblanket and Stark explain, the land is for Indigenous peoples "a living entity we live *with* and generate knowledge *through*."[289] Settler colonialism and nation-state building, whether in Canada or in Québec, have been disruptive and at times even destructive of the ways in which Indigenous peoples live with and produce knowledge through the land. For Starblanket and Stark, appreciating the extent of the effects of settler colonialism requires embracing a rich, broad, diverse, situated yet fluid and mobile understanding of Indigenous peoples' relationship to the land. They argue,

> To understand how settler colonialism has (re)ordered our relationships to place requires us to take greater care in understanding our engagement with place as a series of meaning-making practices. We must bring forward our own rich stories about how we relate to Creation which means we must expand our focus to include both the other living beings that have shaped and regulated our relationships to land as well as how our relationships with and across land are generated through our movements across these territories.[290]

[288] Kiera L. Ladner, "Governing Within an Ecological Context," 130.
[289] Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Towards a Relational Paradigm," 182.
[290] Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Towards a Relational Paradigm," 190.

Additionally, Indigenous peoples see the role of the land in self-determination against the backdrop of a conception of justice that is centered on an obligation to maintain relations of reciprocity in interdependency.[291] These two notions of reciprocity and interdependency serve to reject the principles of objectification and contunattol that define nation-state territorialisation in its connection with ideals of certainty and security. Poirier, who studies contemporary Atikamekw land tenure in Québec argues that, regardless of claims of sovereignty and juridico-political management of the territory by non-indigenous governments, Atikamekw continue transmitting the land according to family lineage and in conformity to Atikamekw law.[292] According to her, it is through this specific relationship to the land that the cultural consciousness and resistance of the Atikamekw people is expressed.[293] Poirier further explains:

> *Ces aires de responsabilité territoriales, aux frontières fluides et perméables, et que délimitent généralement les voies fluviales, les Atikamekw les vivent, les racontent et les transmettent, tels ces ensembles de lieux et de sites de campement, nommés et signifiés, imprégnés et porteurs de la présence, des marques et des activités des ancêtres (kimocomnok).*[294]

Citing an Elder on what happens when one transmit a family territory to the future generations, Poirier explains, ""He gives his onerisiwin," a way of being and living which implies a commitment and a responsiblity towards the forest, but also a pathway towards maturity and autonomy."[295] Here notions of maturity and autonomy are carried through a relational understanding of self-determination and territorialisation. From the perspective expressed in this example, the relationship *Atikamekw* have with their territory *unsettles* the authority of the state by actively renewing their ancestral tie in the present. The understanding of self-determination

[291] Colin Scott, "Le partage des ressources au Québec: perspectives et strategies autochtones," Les Autochtones et le Québec: Des premiers contact au plan Nord, ed. Alain Beaulieu, Stéphan Gervais and Martin Papillon. Montréal: PUM, 2013 p. 364.
[292] Sylvie Poirier, "Contemporanéités autochtones, territoires et (post)colonialisme: réflexions sur des exemples canadiens et australiens," *Anthropologie et Sociétés.* 24, no. 1 (Annual 2000): ?
[293] Sylvie Poirier, "Contemporanéités autochtones, " ?.
[294] Sylvie Poirier, "Contemporanéités autochtones, " ?.
[295] Sylvie Poirier, "Contemporanéités autochtones, " ?.

expressed by the Elder Poirier interviewed also challenges claims of absoluteness, exclusivity, universality, and integrity that are features of the nation-state.[296] Indigenous peoples claim a primordial, ongoing, and different relationship to the land – one that cannot be subsumed under the authority of the state. The hegemonic movement in Québec to try to achieve *in*vulnerable self-determination as a nation-state has had and continues having detrimental, at times even destructive effects on Indigenous self-determination. Yet, the continued resistance of Indigenous peoples is a sign that self-determination as/through sovereignty has failed to create conditions of certainty and security for the Québécois.

Conclusion

In Québec like elsewhere, assumptions, discourses and practices of sovereignty are mobilized for the very purpose of concealing the fact that we can never escape living in interdependency with others. The problem is that rather than addressing the problem of vulnerability that accompanies relationality, sovereignty renders us even more vulnerable, mainly by preventing us from truly learning to live with others. In this sense, I want to close this chapter by citing Vincent once more as she concludes her analysis with a reflection on the need to emancipate ourselves from our desire for certainty and security in order to open up to the endless possibilities offered to us when we define ourselves through relationality. Vincent explains,

> The ideal of a world without border and therefore without bias is utopian. What could be without a doubt avoided, however, is the static and hierarchical model based on certainty in which the Self has wrapped itself – the existence of a rational and scientific truth as justification for power abuse and more or less pathological

[296] I am using the notion of territorialization in the sense developed by Claude Raffestin, who presents territory and territoriality as deriving "from the activity that humans carry out in the space that is given or provided to them in common, within the limits of the conception that they have of it." See Raffestin, Claude. "Space, territory, and territoriality," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30, no. 1 (2012), 124. Raffestin also claims "the construction of territory is the consequence of territoriality defined as the ensemble of relations that a society maintains with exteriority and alterity for the satisfaction of its needs, towards the end of attaining the greatest possible autonomy compatible with the resources of the system. *Ibid.*, 121.

> behaviour. Without a doubt we could think about getting out of this trap that is alterityto learn to play with the dynamic of margins. In order to do this, the distance between Self and Other needs to no longer be considered definitive, but diluted into a multitude of possibilities, which would necessarily lead to a multitude of possibilities in defining the Self.[297]

In my analysis, Vincent presents in this passage the full circle of transformation that is prerequisite for establishing a post-colonial relationship – an actual nation-to-nation relationship. It requires adopting a different relationship to the self, which is necessarily a different relationship to others. Through becoming accepting of relationality, new possibilities for imagining the self are discovered, but this implies first and foremost challenging any understanding of the self based in sovereignty.

[297] Sylvie Vincent, "De la nécessité des clôtures," 81. My translation.

Chapter Four: Relational Self-determination Through Gifting

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss Marcel Mauss's *Essai sur le don* (translated into English and hereafter cited as *The Gift)*, published in 1925, as an alternative view on how humans may respond to the problem of vulnerability and the tension between self-determination and relationality. The influence of this book has long been contained within the limits of the discipline of anthropology, but this chapter contends that it is to the discipline of political theory that the book makes its most valuable contribution.

The political vision contained in *The Gift* presents relationality as a fact of life we need to work with rather than aspire to defeat. By drawing attention to how much of who we are as social beings depends on giving, receiving, and giving in return, in other words *sharing*, Mauss challenges the idea of the priority of the modern sovereign political subject over sociality. The closing of the self unto itself that forms the norm of modern Western self-determination is not an option for Mauss. He points to the practice of gift exchange as evidence of a possible alternative political response and as a way to mediate our relations to alterity. In doing so, Mauss challenges the idea that there may be something given or absolute about the association between self-determination and sovereignty. Far from being limited to the practice of exchanging objects as gifts (as it occurs around birthday celebrations), gift exchange, as described by Mauss belongs to an understanding that sees *giving* as the most fundamental reality of politics. This implies a thoroughly different understanding of the self and self-determination – one that challenges axiomatic individualistic characteristics of the modern sovereign subject, as well as its positioning as the most basic unit of politics. By asserting the priority of relationality over individuality and autonomy through a study of gift exchange, Mauss contributes to developing a

theory of relational self-determination (individual, but mostly collective) that has the potential of transforming the paradigmatic answer given to problems of uncertainty, insecurity, and vulnerability more generally.

The notion of reciprocity is at the heart of Mauss's reflection on the meaning of gift giving. Throughout *The Gift*, Mauss's thinking on the socio-political implications of gift giving is articulated around a specific problem – the one of the nature of the obligation to give in return. Mauss asks: "*Quelle est la règle de droit et d'intérêt qui, dans les sociétés de type arriéré ou archaïque, fait que le présent reçu est obligatoirement rendu? Quelle force y a-t-il dans la chose qu'on donne qui fait que le donataire la rend*?"[298] But *The Gift* is also a reflection on the origins of society and the question of a first impulse to give cannot be separated from the one of the return of the gift. The act of giving, the reception of the gift, and its return are bound together by the principle of reciprocity. It is the play of this principle that allows for the continuous perpetuation of cycles of exchange. According to Mauss's perspective, the gift leads to the development of vast networks of alliances that structure society. The existence of the political community is being constantly renewed through its participation to all the different cycles of exchange it is part of. According to Mauss, reciprocity is what holds society together. To exchange gifts is to take active part to the sociality network that makes life in common possible.

What makes *The Gift* so important of a book is the fact that Mauss tries to extract from different empirical modalities of gift exchange a theory of reciprocity as the foundation of society. This is verified by Mauss's depiction of gift giving as a "total social fact." More precisely, according to Marcel Hénaff, there are three dimensions to this Maussian notion of "total social fact." Firstly, Hénaff explains, gift exchange is integrative and transversal. As a

[298] Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don* (Paris: PUF, 2007), 66-67.

result, it has ramifications into all the institutions of a given society.[299] In turn, these institutions find a mode of expression in gift giving and other contractual relations of the same order. Mauss claims religious, juridical, moral, political, familial, economic institutions rest on the total social fact that is gift exchange while at once contributing to its perpetuation.[300] Secondly, the whole of society is engaged in gift giving.[301] In other words, gift exchange cannot be made equivalent to a sum of individual and particular exchanges. Similarly, its significance cannot be reduced to its effect on the individual people involved in a specific exchange. Hénaff argues, "in these exchanges, it is society itself that takes action, as an indivisible whole."[302] According to Mauss, when we give something to someone, we participate in structures of exchange that support the whole of the community or communities involved. This is often done in an unconscious manner, obviously, but the purpose of Mauss's essay is to demonstrate that for the most part people are aware of the importance of giving for sustaining society and human life more generally. This point will be discussed in more detail in the course of this chapter. Finally, according to Hénaff, Mauss sees gift exchange as a universal reality, present in all societies. Mauss discusses gift exchanges in the context of so-called traditional – i.e. stateless – societies, where the gift is the most visible, but it does not take anything away from its complexity. Clearly, Mauss sees a high level of social and political sophistication being expressed in gift giving. Approaching *The Gift* through this notion of total social fact is one way in which it can be read as a text contributing to our understanding of self-determination.

On the topic of the political significance of *The Gift*, there are two interpretations that are particularly influential. On the one hand there is the one by Marshal Sahlins, who reads *The Gift*

[299] Marcel Hénaff, *Le prix de la vérité: le don, l'argent, la philosophie* (Paris: Seuil, 2002), 162.
[300] Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don*, 66.
[301] Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don*, 73.
[302] Marcel Hénaff, *Le prix de la vérité*, 162. My translation.

through a Hobbesian lens and presents the gift as a "kind of social contract for the primitives."[303] Interpreted as such, the gift serves to mark a distinction between the instability of the state of nature and the constituted order and safety of the political community. On the other hand, Derrida's interpretation contends that a gift is only a gift when given freely, without expectation of a return. For Derrida, a gift must be pure to qualify as such, and the Maussian gift, with its obligation of reciprocity, is equivalent to a debt. Accordingly, Derrida dismisses it as a non-gift because a return is always expected. Both Sahlins and Derrida's perspectives raise concerns with regards to the issue of self-determination, due in particular to their respective perspective on the question of the self, which then shapes their understanding of the political community. Between Sahlins and Derrida we oscillate between a self-interested, rights bearing individual and one that lacks substance and definition. A third interpretation is however possible – one that does justice to Mauss's contribution to political theory. Drawing from the work of Indigenous and non-indigenous scholars, the last section of the chapter explores the question of how the gift constitutes a relational approach to self-determination.

Sahlins's Reading of Mauss through Hobbes

One of the first authors to interpret *The Gift* as a political essay is anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, who reads it as an argument on the origins of society. Sahlins's book *Stone Age Economics,* published in 1972, includes a chapter titled the "Spirit of the Gift" that draws parallel between Mauss's essay and Hobbes's *Leviathan.* The position defended by Sahlins could not be further removed from the one presented in this chapter, as he applies unto Mauss's thought the blueprint famously developed by Hobbes in the seventeenth century for understanding politics. For various reasons that I will discuss below, Sahlins's chapter on the gift aims at bringing

[303] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," in *Stone Age Economics* by Marshall Sahlins (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972), 169.

Mauss's contribution to political thought within the fold of the hegemonic view of politics that forms Hobbes's theory of sovereignty. In doing so, Sahlins mischaracterizes Mauss as a follower of Hobbes – as a thinker who is indebted to him. Nevertheless, Sahlins's argument remains a reference. This is why it must be challenged in order to refute the analogy between the two authors and argue that, on the contrary, Mauss offers an alternative to the Hobbesian approach to politics in general and self-determination in particular.

The problem is that Sahlins projects unto Mauss the whole of Hobbes's system of thought at the cost of exaggerating points of similarity, while overlooking the ones of difference. Hobbes's project is to defend a specific political order – the state. This is different from the one of Mauss, whose reflection is rather a theoretical exploration of the conditions of possibility for life in common in a world where relationality is a given. Mauss wants to understand what brings people to form a community and what allows for its ongoing existence. If this question is ever a concern for Hobbes, he resolves it by giving the sovereign the power to rule over differences. Mauss, on the contrary, presents the gift as a mechanism available to all for tying bonds across differences and making society.

The gift is presented by Sahlins as playing in the context of Mauss's argument the same role as the one played by the social contract in Hobbes's thought experiment. In its structure, Hobbes's justification for the social contract appears as an opposition between a pre-existing violent and chaotic state of nature and a unified and constituted political community where the rule of law allows for durable peace to exist. Accordingly, when Shalins reads *The Gift* through a Hobbesian lens, it becomes a "new version of the dialogue between chaos and covenant."[304] To be certain, Sahlins argues that *The Gift* emerges from an "original pre-condition of disorder."[305]

[304] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 169.
[305] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 169.

He also claims that the perspective of war "reappears persistently"[306] in Mauss's famous essay. Sahlins's analysis on this point relies on this passage in which Mauss states that "to refuse to give or to fail to invite is, like refusing to accept, equivalent to a declaration of war; it is to refuse alliance and communion."[307] There is no point in denying it; Mauss opposes the gift to war. As this passage clearly states, he sees these two things as contradictory and thinks the former's purpose is the avoidance of the latter. But to conclude from this passage that Mauss shares Hobbes's views regarding the state of nature is misguided. Mauss rejects the idea of the existence of the state of nature. For him, there is no pre-political condition of chaos prior to the existence of the state. He does not oppose the order of the state to the violence of the state of nature.

More precisely, Sahlins's interpretation in that regard is focused on the notion of total prestation that he describes as a "total contract."[308] Mauss himself links his study of the system of total prestations among Polynesian peoples to his work on "archaic" contract forms.[309] In order to understand what is at stake in the gift, it is worth citing Mauss extensively on the system of total prestations. Mauss writes:

> First, it is not individuals but collectivities that impose obligations of exchange and contract upon each other. The contracting parties are legal entities: clans, tribes, and families who confront and oppose one another either in groups who meet face to face in one spot, or through their chiefs, or in both these ways at once. Moreover, what they exchange is not solely property and wealth, movable and immovable goods, and things economically useful. In particular, such exchanges are acts of politeness: banquets, rituals, military services, women, children, dances, festivals, and fairs, in which economic transaction is only one element, and in which the passing on of wealth is only one feature of a much more general and enduring contract.[310]

[306] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 174.
[307] Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don* quoted in Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 174.
[308] Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don*, 71.
[309] Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don*, 69.
[310] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, trans. W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990), 6-7.

The previous passage confirms that Mauss uses the word "contract" when discussing the social impacts that the gift has on the communities involved. It also shows how it is the whole of those communities that is affected by the system of total prestations and how they become obliged to each other in the long term because of it. I believe this passage explains very well how the gift is meant by Mauss as a total social fact and a general theory of reciprocity. It also makes it clear that, as a theory of obligation, Mauss understands the gift as a system of law.

Should it be concluded from this that Mauss is in agreement with Hobbes over the issue of the origins of society? Sahlins is right that both Hobbes with his *Leviathan* and Mauss with *The Gift* are interested in answering the question of the origins of society. This observation, however, is insufficient to conclude to "a strong convergence in the analysis"[311] as Sahlins does. Sahlins unquestionably projects unto Mauss the Hobbesian categories and paradigm without regards for Mauss's actual theoretical project, making a series of assumptions that are inconsistent with his broader perspective on life in common. If the two authors ponder on the same problem, their perspectives remain profoundly different. In the second chapter of this dissertation, I demonstrate how Hobbes's theorisation on the origins of society and sovereignty can be interpreted as a response to the problems of vulnerability. I also argue that this specific response has had a durable impact on modern Western approaches to the question of self-determination, to the point of becoming hegemonic. One of the problems with Sahlins's interpretation of *The Gift* is that he articulates it from within this hegemonic perspective, having already accepted its claim of universality. In reality, even by looking at a similar issue – the origins of society – the two authors pursue very different projects.

These respective projects lead to two different perspectives on the question of self-determination. As argued in chapter two, the understanding of self-determination that has formed

[311] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 171.

as a result of Hobbes' influence on Western political thought has made the modern sovereign state the highest mark of political maturity and certainty. This position is at odds with the understanding of self-determination that transpires from Mauss's work. Indeed, from Mauss's perspective, self-determination depends on the ongoing and reciprocal engagements of people into relations of exchange. While Hobbes's understanding of self-determination is foreclosed into a given form – the state – Mauss's depends on the perpetual movement of gifts. Where Hobbes seems unable to imagine that relations between different people can be anything other than antagonistic and competitive, modeled on a zero-sum understanding of power, Mauss's theoretical reflection on the meaning of gift exchange presents an opportunity for rethinking our relationship to difference.

Admittedly, Sahlins acknowledges early in his analysis that Mauss and Hobbes are in some respects very different thinkers, especially with regards to their presentation of human psychology. Sahlins goes as far as claiming that Mauss is closer to Rousseau in his depiction of human psychology.[312] Sahlins states: "Mauss's primitive society rather returns to the third stage of the *Discourse on Inequality* than to the radical individualism of Hobbesian state of nature."[313] Nevertheless, Sahlins persists in drawing an analogy with Hobbes, claiming that, "if Mauss is a spiritual descendant of Rousseau, as a political philosopher he is akin to Hobbes."[314] The problem is that the differences between Mauss and Hobbes on the topic of human nature are more profound that a simple disagreement regarding human psychology and have political implications for understanding society, despite his claim to the contrary.

[312] Marcel Mauss, "Une Catégorie de L'Esprit Humain: La Notion de Personne Celle de 'Moi,'" *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 68 (Jul. - Dec., 1938): 263.
[313] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 170-1.
[314] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 171.

By setting aside the question of human psychology as one of minor importance with regards to the question of politics, Sahlins fails to acknowledge that a certain type of individualism is structural to Hobbes's political thought. In the context of Hobbes's work, his conception of human nature simply cannot pass as a mere question of psychology. In other words, it is impossible to evacuate Hobbes's radical individualism from his social contract theory, which means that for Mauss to agree with Hobbes, he would also have to share his views on human nature. In my analysis, by overlooking the issue, Sahlins makes his the Hobbesian assumption that the basic monad of politics is a self-bounded, autonomous, right-bearing individual. In other words, he projects unto Mauss's work the same structural individualism than the one that defines Hobbes's social contract theory. Sahlins claims that "[i]n the perspective of Mauss, as it was for Hobbes, the understructure of society is war."[315] It is certainly the case for Hobbes, but then it should be added that radical individualism is the understructure of war and the root cause of the social contract. This is inconsistent with a Maussian perspective, and his essay on the person specifically warns his reader against making the assumption that individualism is natural and universal.

In 1938 Mauss published an essay titled "Une Catégorie de l'esprit humain: la notion de personne celle de "moi"" more commonly referred to as the essay on the person. The essay has for object the individual subject that forms the epicentre of Hobbes's theory of sovereignty. The purpose of his essay is to expose its emergence as a historically constructed category of the mind that shapes our understanding of the world.[316] Thus, the notion of the person may appear to us innate and natural, but this, for Mauss, is an illusion inherent to its role as a category of the mind. To further assert this point, Mauss insists that his essay is not an inquiry into linguistics or

[315] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 171.
[316] Marcel Mauss, "Une Catégorie de L'Esprit Humain," 263

human psychology, but into the social history of right and morals.[317] To this effect, the section on the *Roman persona* is by far the most closely relevant and effective. In this sention, Mauss shows how the category of the person as a rights-bearing subject is an integral component of Roman law. He also shows how the *Roman persona* was eventually given a moral dimension, aside from its legal quality, and that this moral sense of being a person implies being "conscious, independent, autonomous, free, responsible."[318] This moral dimension is at the heart of the conception of the self that forms the modern ideal of self-determination today. Ultimately, the essay on the person proves that for Mauss, "the category of the self-directed, privately conscious, individual human person, congruent with the public endorsement of individual identity and agency, is not a human universal but itself a product of Western history."[319] The category of the person – or the understanding of the subject – that is integral to the structure of the Hobbesian social contract is inconsistent with Maussian thought. Contrary to what Sahlins claims, the difference between Mauss and Hobbes's conception of the human is not limited to psychology. Mauss rejects the idea that a universal individual may form the structure politics.

More precisely, the claim of similarity put forward by Sahlins depends on focussing on three characteristics of the Hobbesian social contract, while overlooking other ones. According to Sahlins, as political thinkers, Hobbes and Mauss agree at least "on the natural political state as a generalized distribution of force, [the] possibility of escaping from this condition by the aid of reason, and [the] advantages realized thereby in cultural progress."[320] In order to make sense of this claim, it needs to be unpacked in light of Sahlins's specific interpretation of Hobbes's state of nature.

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[317] Marcel Mauss, "Une Catégorie de L'Esprit Humain," 265.
[318] Marcel Mauss, "Une Catégorie de L'Esprit Humain," 278. My translation.
[319] Wendy James, "One of Us: Marcel Mauss and 'English' anthropology," introduction to *Marcel Mauss: A Centenary Tribute*, ed. Wendy James and N. J. Allen (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 15.
[320] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 171.

Against the widespread representation of the state of nature as a state of chaos, Sahlins claims it is in fact a "political order," presenting the "structure of society."[321] What Sahlins means is that, according to him, the state of nature is the result of structuring factors that regulate human interactions. The state of nature may appear as a state of war; but for Sahlins it is a "determinate political form."[322] More precisely, he describes the state of nature in the following terms:

> This war of each against all is not just the disposition to use force but the *right* to do so, not merely certain inclinations but certain *relations of power,* not simply a passion for supremacy but a sociology of dominance, not only the instinct of competition but the legitimacy of the confrontation. The state of nature is already a kind of society.[323]

To a large extent, I agree with Shalins that the state of nature is organized along specific political structures rather than being a meaningless state of chaos. This goes in the sense of what I argue above regarding the structural importance of individualism as a political factor. The issue is that, for Hobbes, these structures serve to legitimize the right to resort to violence. For example, the "general distribution of force" over which Hobbes and Mauss are in agreement according to Sahlins is one of those structures. This structural justification of violence seems incompatible with the gift as presented by Mauss.

Sahlins also thinks that Hobbes and Mauss agree on the idea that the state of nature is a condition humans can only escape by the to use of reason. According to this interpretation, "the gift is Reason"[324] and "the triumph of human rationality over the folly of war."[325] Sahlins points to the following passage of *The* Gift to support his claim: "it is by opposing reason to emotion, by setting up the will for peace against rash follies of this kind, that people succeed in

[321] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 171
[322] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 172
[323] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 172.
[324] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 175.
[325] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 175.

substituting alliance, gift and commerce for war, isolation and stagnation."[326] The problem is that within the Hobbesian paradigm, human reason stands for something very specific: obedience to the law. For Hobbes, humans are reasonable when they consent to the social contract and to living their life under the state, and any notion of human progress is considered to be dependent on the rule of law. Yet, the gift is not only equivalent to reason but also to "the liberation of culture."[327] Embedded in Sahlins's reading is his own uncritical acceptance of this very specific definition of reason and progress.[328]

There are of course important differences between the two authors that Sahlins cannot ignore. For instance, Sahlins acknowledges how the gift, even as a social contract, "does not dissolve the separate parties within a higher unity."[329] He also makes it clear that the gift does not "specify a third party standing over and above the separate interests of those who contract,"[330] and that "[m]ost important, it does not withdraw their force."[331] In other words, the gift does not lead to the institution of sovereign rule. While Sahlins admits that the "condition of peace"[332] under the classic Hobbesian social contract is "always a structure of submission, and sometimes of terror,"[333] he also recognizes that "except for the honor accorded to generosity, the

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[326] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 175.
[327] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 175.
[328] In *Tribesmen*, an earlier work from 1964, Sahlins makes a distinction to that effect between peoples living in states and the ones organized as tribes. Sahlins claims :

> A civilization is a society specially constituted to maintain Law and Order; the social complexity and cultural richness of civilizations depend on institutional guarantees of Peace. Lacking these institutional means and guarantees, tribesmen live in a condition of War, and War limits the scale, complexity and all-round richness of their culture, and accounts for some of their more 'curious' customs.

Marshall Sahlins, *Tribesmen* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1964), quoted in Michael Asch, "Levi-Strauss and the Political: The Elementary Structures of Kinship and the Resolution of Relations between Indigenous Peoples and Settler States," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11, no. 3 (2005): 440 n14.
[329] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 170.
[330] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 170.
[331] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 170.
[332] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 170.
[333] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 170.

gift is no sacrifice of equality and never of liberty."[334] In spite of those differences, however, Sahlins maintains that there is a convergence in Hobbes and Mauss's conceptualization of how reason, the rule of law, and progress interact at the origin of society. By claiming so, he makes Mauss's theory of reciprocity equivalent to Hobbes's theory of sovereignty.

I argue on the contrary that there are sufficient grounds to conclude that Mauss's "general theory of obligation"[335] – since this is what *The Gift* is essentially about – is nothing like Hobbes's theory of sovereignty. While it is true that Mauss aims to study the "*lien juridique*" that is created between peoples through the exchange of the gift, and while he refers to the system of total prestations as a legal system, the overall argument tends towards a theory of reciprocity taken in the largest sense, no matter how limited or restrictive the language he uses to describe it may be. As Sahlins states, albeit without ever fully realizing the potential buried in the claim: "reciprocity is a "between" relation."[336] Aside from the question of whether or not the language of obligation and law are used by Hobbes and Mauss in comparable ways, I also take issue with Sahlins assimilating *The Gift* to Hobbesian teleology of progress.

The question of progress has important implications for the issue of self-determination. As I have previously argued, the Hobbesian teleology serves to assert the inevitability of sovereignty. Sahlins simply assumes that Mauss means the same thing as Hobbes when he uses the word "progress" to illustrate the benefits brought by the gift. In order to illustrate this problem, I begin by citing the following passage from *The Gift*, in which Mauss refers indeed to the notion of progress.

> Societies have progressed in so far as they themselves, their subgroups, and lastly, the individuals in them, have succeeded in stabilizing relationships, giving, receiving,

[334] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 170.
[335] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, trans. W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990), 16.
[336] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 170.

> and finally, giving in return. To trade, the first condition was to be able to lay aside the spear. From then onwards they succeeded in exchanging goods and persons, no longer only between clans, but between tribes and nations, and, above all, between individuals. Only then did people learn how to create mutual interests, giving mutual satisfaction, and, in the end, to defend them without having to resort to arms. Thus the clan, the tribe, and peoples have learnt how to oppose and to give to one another without sacrificing themselves to one another. This is what tomorrow, in our so-called civilized world, classes and nations and individuals also, must learn. This is one of the enduring secrets of their wisdom and solidarity.[337]

Taken by itself this passage indeed seems to support Sahlins's analysis. However, I argue that it must be replaced in the broader context of *The Gift* and interpreted in light of Mauss's primary purpose. Therefore, it seems problematic to not distinguish between Hobbes's teleological conception of human progress, which points to the inevitability of obedience to the law as the source of invulnerable self-determination, and Mauss's idea that ongoing participation in gift exchange is a source of progress and an active approach to self-determination. Additionally, Mauss insists that the institutions that he describes concern all aspects of the societies involved. In this sense, a strictly juridical interpretation does not seem to do justice to his work.

Moreover, buried in this confusion is the problem of the representation of segmentary societies, which, according to anthropology theory, are societies where power is shared or distributed among various of its segments – families, clans, classes, political figures and so on. They are by definition opposed to a unitary society like the ones that identify with the state as the ultimate legitimate source of power and authority. All the societies represented in *The Gift* are described by Mauss as segmentary societies.[338] According to Mauss's analysis, the gift is more present, particularly in the form of total prestations, in societies of this type. For Mauss, segementary societies are more familiar with the institution of gift exchange then any other type

[337] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, trans. W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990), 105-6.
[338] Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don*, 245.

of society. Yet, Sahlins insists on representing them as pertaining to the Hobbesian state of nature, describing them as "oscillating permanently between confrontation and dispersion,"[339] and as "brutish and static."[340] He emphatically points to the following passage as proof of Mauss's attachment to the structure of Hobbes's argument. Mauss writes,

> In all the societies that have immediately preceded our own, and still exist around us, and even in numerous customs extant in our popular morality, there is no middle way: one trusts completely, or one mistrusts completely; one lays down one's arms and gives up magic, or one gives everything, from fleeting acts of hospitality to one's daughter and one's goods. It is in such a state of mind that men have abandoned their reserve and have been able to commit themselves to giving and giving in return. This was because they had no choice. Two groups of men who meet can only either draw apart, and, if they show mistrust towards one another or issue a challenge, fight—or they can negotiate.[341]

It is ironic that despite Mauss's own affirmation that "men" do not have a choice, what this passage actually describes is a choice. I argue that what Mauss is more consistently arguing throughout the essay is that humans have a choice between giving, which is conducive to peaceful relationships (but not only) and refusing to, which leads to conflict (and nothing else). That being said, Mauss also believes that gifting is a requirement of being human because life in common is impossible without it and that human life is impossible outside of society. In other words, humans could not consistently or systematically refuse to give.

While Mauss makes his argument about societies from the past, it is clear that humans continue living in a political landscape where they have to be active participants in maintaining peaceful relations of co-existence. For Mauss, this is done by recognizing that we need to maintain good relations with others and by being involved in the movement of the gift. There is no end to this political reality. Contrary to what Sahlins argues, there is no passage from a state

[339] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 175
[340] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 176
[341] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, trans. W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990), 104-5.

of war to a state of peace through the gift. There is no foundational moment of society. Rather, it is a choice to which humans are always confronted, as society is continuously being made through giving, receiving, and returning gifts. In this sense, segmentary societies were no less "complex" than the ones we live in today. Sahlins claims that the gift is "the primitive way to achieve the peace that in civil society is secured by the state."[342] But Mauss is also very critical of the state, as he claims Western societies have evolved in a manner that makes us forget their origin in the gift exchange. From that perspective, societies have not progressed so much as they have regressed, for the spirit of the gift no longer animates them to the same extent as it used to when the system of total prestations was in place within and amongst segmentary societies.[343]

With regards to the question of self-determination more precisely, I argue that from a Maussian perspective, to refuse to take part in gift giving and to resort to conflict and confrontation for securing the means and resources necessary to one's existence pertains to a paradigm that presupposes and individualistic conception of the self. As I have explained above, this is a paradigm to which Mauss does not subscribe. Alternatively, by stressing the socio-

[342] Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," 169.

[343] In a recent book and published in collaboration with David Graeber, Sahlins presents an argument on the universality of kingship that seems to contradict the one made in his chapter on Mauss. The premise of *On* Kings is that governance by kings or king-like figures is so widespread across time, space, and cultures that it appears to be natural to humans. Looking at various kinds of relationship people from different cultures entertain with divine or spiritual figures or ideals, Sahlins and Graeber claim that it is a normal thing for human societies to be governed in reference to a cosmic order. They conclude from this proposition that, "given the governance of human society by metaperson authorities with ultimate life-and-death powers, something quite like the state is a universal human condition" (Sahlins and Graeber 2017, 3). They also claim: "the state of nature has the nature of the state" (Sahlins and Graeber 2017, 3). Sahlins and Graeber seem to challenge the Hobbesian perspective by arguing against the idea of natural equality and claiming that the state of nature is already a hierarchy when we consider its relationship to a cosmologic meta-order. In other words, this more recent argument seems incompatible with the notion of a state of nature that forms the premise of Sahlins' reading of Mauss in 1972. But after discussing this point at length with Asch and following his reading of Sahlins, I argue that the contradiction is only superficial. Many aspects of Sahlins and Graeber's argument in *On Kings* actually resonate with Hobbes's thought experiment on the state of nature. I recall for example that in the Hobbesian state of nature equality amongst individuals is so radical that it becomes untenable, so people have no choice but to seek to create hierarchies. Whereas it is common for political theorists to insist on equality as a defining feature of the state of nature, I argue that hierarchy is just as natural within Hobbes's system of thought. The idea of hierarchy being essentially natural to humans is further argued in the two authors' recent book. Ultimately, through its normalization of king-subjects relationships and its blanket application across different context, *On Kings* serves to further assert the universality and inevitability of sovereignty, as well as the notion that human governance is always by nature hierarchical.

political significance of gifting as an ever-present alternative to war and as a way to "make society,"[344] Mauss proposes an understanding of self-determination that refutes the possibility of a self-sufficient self. Moreover, by insisting on the presence of gift giving in societies that are without a state, Mauss shows that the process of exchanging gifts is independent from state institutions. This is another way in which Mauss challenges the Hobbesian idea that sovereignty in the state form represents the highest achievement of modern politics, the finality of human self-determination, and the remedy against vulnerability.

Derrida and non-reciprocal gifting

Another famous interpretation of Mauss's work is the one by theorist Jacques Derrida. Whereas Sahlins takes the largest perspective possible, presenting the gift as a thought experiment involving the whole of society, Derrida delves into the nature of the gift itself, paying close attention to the intentions and motives of the giver. Derrida's main thesis on the Maussian gift is that it serves to assert the existence of a modern political subject – the giver. By arguing this, Derrida, like Sahlins, inscribes Mauss's work within the modern Western tradition in political thought. He too reads *The Gift* as an essay on sovereign self-determination consistent with the Hobbesian tradition. In this section, I particularly take issue with the implications of Derrida's interpretation of Mauss's work around the question of the relationship between reciprocity and subjectivity or self-determination. My aim in this section is to respond to critiques of Mauss that take for target the idea that the gift is never freely given and consequently interpret his work solely through the logic of indebtedness.

Derrida is never fully explicit regarding his definition of the gift and noticeably avoids alluding to any *value* or *purpose.* For him, a gift, in order to be considered a gift, must be pure,

[344] Marcel Hénaff, *Le prix de la vérité*, ?

i.e. given freely. On the basis of this criterion, he contests the idea that the gift is ever the real topic of Mauss's essay. For Derrida, Mauss's perspective on the gift, far from questioning of modern forms of subjectivity, reaffirms the possibility that a political subject "identical to itself and conscious of its identity"[345] may exist *prior to and independently from* any gift being offered. According to Derrida, the structure of exchange presented by Mauss presupposes a subject who "[seeks] through the gesture of the gift to constitute its own unity, and precisely, to get its own identity recognized so that that identity comes back to it, so that it can re-appropriate its identity: as its property."[346] Mauss's interest in the question of reciprocity and the necessity for a return signifies for Derrida that he is more interested in *subjects* exchanging *objects* than about the gift. Derrida claims:

> [O]ne could go so far as to say that a work as monumental as Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* speaks of everything but the gift: It deals with economy, exchange, contract (*do ut des*), it speaks of raising the stakes, sacrifice, gift *and* counter-gift – in short everything that in the thing itself impels the gift *and* the annulment of the gift.[347]

Derrida's perspective on the gift raises the question: Under what conditions would he consider a gift to be pure? For Derrida, when offering a gift, one must not expect or desire receiving something in return. I will discuss below how far he pushes that argument, but it basically means that, given Mauss's insistence on the need to reciprocate gifts received, Derrida sees Maussean gifts are nothing other than objects exchanged as commodity. Derrida believes that the simple notion that gifts must be reciprocated is sufficient proof that Mauss's argument belongs to the realm of economics. For him, the gift should be what disrupts the economy, for it interrupts reciprocity. Derrida writes:

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[345] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 11,
[346] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*, 11.
[347] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*, ?

> But is it not the gift, if there is any, also that which interrupts the economy? That which in suspending economic calculation, no longer gives rise to exchange? That which opens the circle so as to defy reciprocity or symmetry, the common measure, and so as to turn aside the return in view of the no-return?[348]

Derrida claims that even if one could ever come in contact with the gift (which is very unlikely given the requirement that the gift be pure), that person would most likely lack the ability to see it, because of the difficulty to think outside of the logic of symmetrical exchange. The dominance of the contractualist logic, which Derrida defines as reciprocity, tends to try to recreate said reciprocity in everything else. The idea that gifts are to be returned at some point is for him a sign that the gift operates within the same logic as accumulative economy. For Derrida's understanding of reciprocity is equivalent to symmetry. It is about getting even, which, again, ties into a conception of the gift as something that leads to indebtedness. As I explain in the next section, however, Mauss's perspective on reciprocity is of a different kind and means a lot more than simple repayment for a gift received.

Pursuing the exploration of the logic of Derrida's argument, it can be argued that the inability to break free of our thinking patterns to see the gift may be a good thing for him. Indeed, among all the difficulties that prevent the gift from happening, there is the very recognition of it as a gift, either the giver or the recipient. From the moment a gift is seen or understood as a gift, it cesses to be a gift according to Derrida. This is why a gift must also be forgotten as soon as it takes place. For Derrida, the gift can never proceed from intentionality. To intentionally give something is to commit an act of will, which itself presupposes the existence of a self-bounded, autonomous and willing subject – the one Derrida calls "identical to itself" because its existence depends on nothing else than its own individuality. Derrida writes:

> The simple intention to give, insofar as it carries intentional meaning of the gift, suffices to make a return payment to oneself. The simple consciousness of the gift

[348] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*, 7.

> right away sends itself back the gratifying image of goodness or generosity, of the giving-being who, knowing itself to be such, recognizes itself in a circular, specular fashion, in a sort of auto-recognition, self-approval, and narcissistic gratitude.[349]

To reframe the problem identified in the language of this dissertation, one could say that Derrida sees intentionality and reciprocity as aimed at creating conditions of clarity and security for subjects in need of individualistic self-determination. According to Derrida, when the gift is theorized and practiced from within the logic of exchange – which he associates to the realm of economy – giving is always a matter of calculation. Derrida claims that from the moment we think of the gift as requiring the presence of a subject whose identity is asserted in the act of giving, this subject "enters into the realm of the calculable as subject."[350] About this subject, Derrida further claims that it is "constituted […] in view of dominating, through calculation and exchange."[351] In short, the question of the intention is always a problem for Derrida, because it denotes the presence if a sovereign subject who uses the gift, as well as other sovereign subjects, as means to an end.

In fact, considerable portions of *The Gift* are meant to show how the gift can be used as a source of power over others – as a mechanism for establishing control. [352] Rather than and act of generosity, the gift is then aimed at gaining certain benefits or advantages. This is the gift in its agonistic form. The gift can also be considered a matter of honour for a subject who seeks to claim authority or to enhance its status. In all those instances, the gift implies utilizing others as, who are then captured into the logic of indebtedness. A recipient of the gift is always expected to offer repayment and failure to comply with this requirement is considered a more or less serious offence, depending on the nature of the gift. In any case, it keeps that person in a lower position

[349] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*, 23.
[350] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*, 24.
[351] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*, 24.
[352] Marcel Mauss, "Gift, Gift," in *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (New York: Routledge, 1997), 30.

in comparison to the giver. According to Derrida, the gift is annulled upon repayment. Yet, far from signifying the end of the logic of indebtedness, repayment only serves to confirm it.

On the topic of the agonistic character of the gift, according to Sami scholar Rauna Kuokkanen, this one is overemphasized by Mauss. As an example Kuokkanen, points to the passages in which Mauss discusses the *potlatch*. Those are often cited in support of the gift-as-debt/aggression thesis and have been critiqued for their lack of accuracy. They without a doubt tend to fetichize the potlatch as an agonistic event, without proper contextualization and without fully representing their non-agonistic aspects. To Kuokkanen, this narrow and incomplete representation is representative of the Canadian state's perspective and attitude towards the potlatch. Kuokkanen argues, "For the Europeans, then, gift giving in the form of potlatches was a threat to nascent civilization and progress." [353] For Kuokkanen, this is explained by the fact that the richness of the gift tends to be evacuated from non-indigenous descriptions of it, including from Mauss. According to her, it is impossible for the gift to be accurately understood and represented if it is experienced as a threat (which explains the Canadian authorities' inability to understand its significance within the context of indigenous communities). It can be deducted that to only think of the gift in antagonising terms does not allow for an accurate description of it. The next section of the chapter discusses Kuokkanen's perspective on the gift at greater length. My point here is that, just as the gift is never freely given, it is never purely antagonising. And despite what Kuokkanen and Derrida claim, Mauss is fully aware of the ambiguity of the gift, as shown in his essay *Gift, Gift*.

In this essay, Mauss points to the double meaning of the word "gift" in Germanic languages, in which it means both "present" and "poison." Mauss suggests that if Germanic

[353] Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University: Responsibility*, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2007), 46

languages have retained this duality it is possibly due to the gift as a system of total prestations being more prevalent and for a longer period of time than in other societies.[354] He mentions in particular the gift of drink as an example of a gift that contains within itself this ambiguity.[355] This observation echoes Derrida's thought on the undecidability of the *pharmakon*.[356] The gift, like medicine, is an aporia for Derrida in the sense that it has this ability of being at once a poison and remedy.

The problem is that for Derrida, presenting the gift as an aporia serves to cast doubt on the very possibility of giving. Keeping in mind the requirement that the gift be pure, it comes as no surprise that Derrida presents it as an extremely rare occurrence. He goes as far as calling it an "event" and entertaining doubt throughout the book that the gift may actually exist at all. In fact, he considers the gift a thing so rare that he refers to it as "the very figure of the impossible."[357] Derrida claims:

> For there to be gift event (we say event and not act), something must come about or happen, in an instant, in an instant that no doubt does not belong to the economy of time, in a time without time, in such a way that the forgetting forgets, that it forgets *itself*, but also in such a way that this forgetting, without being something present, presentable, determinable, sensible or meaningful, is not nothing.[358]

For Derrida, undecidability is integral to the gift, while compromising the very possibility of its actualization.

Mauss too sees a tension in the gift, which is at once free and mandatory, something I will return to shortly. Mauss also appears aware of the possibility that gift giving could be used for serving selfish interests. The essence of his theory, however, is that as a social institution, it

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[354] Marcel Mauss, "Gift, Gift," 28.
[355] Marcel Mauss, "Gift, Gift," 30.
[356] Alan D. Schrift, "Introduction: Why Gift?" introduction to *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (New York: Routledge, 1997), 7.
[357] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*, 7.
[358] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*, 17.

serves greater interests that the ones of the parties immediately involved in a specific exchange. I argue that the chief of those greater interests is the self-determination of society, which requires tending to relations with others. Again, the issue is that Derrida interprets the relationship Mauss establishes between gift exchange and self-determination has an example of what is implied by modern forms of subjectivity. Indeed, it can be argued that for Derrida, who thinks the main purpose of the Maussian gift is the assertion of a specifically modern form of political subjectivity – one that he defines as identical to itself and calculable – Mauss contributes to promoting the ideals of certainty and security that define the discourse on political modernity and invulnerable self-determination in particular. However, these ideals of certainty and security do not match Mauss's conception of the gift, and Derrida fails to recognize the deeply relational nature of a political thought based on the Maussian gift.

Referring to the image of the circle to discuss gift exchange from a Maussian perspective, Derrida claims that to be obliged to others and to have to reciprocate gifts received attest to a desire for closure – the closure of the subject, as well as the one of the circle of exchange. Aiming to understand the Maussian gift from within the logic of indebtedness, Derrida claims that to repay a gift is equivalent to closing the circle of reciprocity unto itself.[359] For him, the gift should be what disrupts the circularity of exchange, something it can only do if given freely. Yet, as Arul Raj Madalai Muthu explains, the problem is that "if we give free gifts, we not only intend to avoid the return gifts from the recipient but also decline to enter into relationship with the recipient of our gifts."[360] From this perspective, insisting that gifts should be free does not result in a more open form of subjectivity but rather in the denial of human relationality. As the

[359] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*, 11.
[360] Arul Raj Madalai Muthu, "The Ambivalence of Gift-Giving," International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities 11, no. 2 (2016). 65.

next two sections of this chapter will show, the gift is not always a matter of indebtedness, even when it comes with an obligation to reciprocate.

Sahlins and Derrida's respective reading of *The Gift* present certain similarities, even if they each proceed from radically different conceptions of the gift. Sahlins wants to focus on the gift's structural role in instituting society and compares it to the Hobbesian social contract. Derrida claims it is void if motivated by anything other than the purest act of generosity, casting doubt on the very possibility of its existence and rejecting the idea that the Maussian gift is a gift at all. In this chapter, I am taking issue with both perspectives and argue that Sahlins and Derrida both fail to capture the complexity and nuances of Mauss's argument. There is a common error at the root of their misinterpretation. Both of them mistakenly assume the presence of an autonomous, individual, self-contained, self-conscious, right bearing political subject in the work of Mauss. They also assume that this individual – with its needs, desires, and intentions – is the motive behind the gift. The gift appears as if its purpose was limited to objects transiting between subjects. Yet, both Sahlins and Derrida read *The Gift* as an essay on self-determination – the self-determination of the modern political subject, in the form of the individual for Derrida and society as state for Sahlins. These interpretations of *The Gift* as a text supporting self-determination as/through sovereignty also suffer from a contractualist bias, where notions of exchange and reciprocity are interpreted as implying some sort of trade between two matching parties. As a result, the idea of obligation and the question of the return of the gift – which is ultimately the question of the perpetuation of the logic of the gift – are reduced to the problem of indebtedness.

Relational Self-Determination Through Gifting

For Kuokkanen, there is a widespread contractualist bias among classic interpretations of the gift,

and this can be traced back to Mauss's groundbreaking essay.[361] According to Kuokkanen, who studies the difficult interaction between Western academia and indigenous epistemes, Mauss fails to fully grasp and transpose into his theory the role played by the gift and what the obligation to give, receive, and reciprocate means in the context of those epistemes. If her reading of *The Gift* seems to side with the ones by Sahlins and Derrida, it is in part because Kuokkanen takes issue with the use of the word exchange in her aim to defeat the contractualist paradigm. Contesting the idea that the gift should be primarily defined by its agonistic potential, Kuokkanen insists that there is more to it than a system of indebtedness. Her perspective makes it clear that if the contractualist bias is so generalized, it is because most interprets of the gift fail to contextualize the latter in a horizon that goes beyond the limits human subjectivity. In other words, the contractualist bias is also a subjective bias, which itself presents the shortcoming of the hegemonic tendency to conceptualize subjectivity as/through sovereignty. In particular, Kuokkanen blames classic gift theories for not paying sufficient attention to the role of gifts in supporting the relationships between humans and their natural environment – something that is unthinkable from the perspective of indigenous epistemes. She argues that, although the gift may be practiced differently in different communities and cultures, there exists a notion, shared among Indigenous cultures, according to which the meaning of the gift is drawn from a specifically indigenous relationship with the land.

Kuokkanen's understanding of the gift resonates with the position of Maori scholar Georgina Stewart, as does her critique of academia. More precisely, Stewart takes issue with the way in which non-indigenous academics have picked up the notion of the *hau.* The hau is described by Mauss as the supernatural spirit of the gift seeking to return to its original owner. The passage of *The Gift* in which he cites Tamati Ranapiri (first cited in work by Elsdon Best) to

[361] Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*.

explain the meaning of the hau continues to be highly debated among anthropologists close to a century after its publication. However, Stewart points out that "Maori voices have been noticeably silent"[362] from these debates, carried by a closed circle of experts who are more or less removed from the contexts that give the hau its meaning. For her, this is a "clear example of Eurocentric appropriation of indigenous knowledge."[363]

In response, she offers an explanation of the hau through Kaupapa Maori research methodology. Stewart claims Kaupapa Maori research methodology is more attentive to political implications than to data collection and analysis, which tend to be heavily privileged by Western academia.[364] Based on her knowledge of the Maori language and culture, her conclusion follows what she presents as a general consensus that Mauss reads too much into the notion of the hau of the gift. Moreover, she claims, he fails to notice that "in Ranapiri's mind, 'hau' as social obligation was clearly the familiar, taken-for-granted idea."[365] Stewart also claims that, meanwhile, Mauss fails to fully grasp the meaning of the hau as obligation to the forest, which in Maori cosmos is personified as Tane.[366] Ultimately, Stewart's work suggests that there is an imbalance in Mauss's assessment of the political implications of the hau of the gift versus of the forest. It can be concluded from her analysis that this imbalance contributes to the contractualist bias to the extent that disproportionate attention is being given to objects and subjects as opposed to relations of interdependency. Indeed, these relations of interdependency, as well as humans'

[362] Georgina Stewart, "The 'Hau' of Research: Mauss Meets Kaupapa Māori," *Journal of World Philosophies* 2 (Summer 2017): 1.
[363] Georgina Stewart, "The 'Hau' of Research: Mauss Meets Kaupapa Māori," 1.
[364] Georgina Stewart, "The 'Hau' of Research: Mauss Meets Kaupapa Māori," 2.
[365] Georgina Stewart, "The 'Hau' of Research: Mauss Meets Kaupapa Māori," 7.
[366] "The Western scientific edifice that examines Māori knowledge has long been familiar with the Māori genealogical model of the cosmos, in which all the living and non-living elements of the world were understood as kin, common descendants of the primordial parent gods Ranginui ('father sky') and Papatūānuku ('earth mother'), and their children the departmental gods, namely Tane and his brothers Tangaroa (god of oceans), Tāwhirimātea (god of winds) and others. Nevertheless, there seems to have been a general failure to follow through on the implications of this model, in relation to this and other ethnographic analyses of Māori concepts." Georgina Stewart, "The 'Hau' of Research: Mauss Meets Kaupapa Māori," 7-8.

position in them, become fully clear when the gift is considered in a broader ecological perspective. From this perspective it becomes apparent that the gift is, as Jacques T. Godbout explains, "the condition sine qua non of all fertility."[367]

In order to offer an alternative perspective, Kuokkanen turns to her own Sami community as an example of how the gift is practiced from inside an Indigenous culture. According to Kuokkanen, the Sami people see humans as interdependent with their natural environment and as active participants to the countless relations of cooperation that this one is made of. The meaning of the gift is inscribed within those relations. Pushing the analysis further, Kuokkanen calls the gift a "central structuring principle"[368] of the indigenous social order, which she describes as "[depending] heavily on negotiation, cooperation, and non-aggression."[369] Kuokkanen describes the gift in the context of her Sami community as a way of showing gratefulness and respect to the land and its natural resources.[370] For example, she mentions the importance of *sieidis*, which are sites in nature where people leave gifts.[371] According to her account, gift offerings are for the Sami people a way of caring for their relations with the natural environment and as a community.

The understanding of the gift presented by Kuokkanen only makes sense if contextualized in a *relational* worldview.

> Instead of viewing the gift as a form of exchange or as having only an economic function, I argue that the gift is a reflection of a particular worldview, one characterized by the perception that the natural environment is a living entity which gives its gifts and abundance to people provided that they observe certain responsibilities and provided that those people treat it with respect and gratitude. Central to this perception is that the world as a whole comprises an infinite web of

[367] Jacques T. Godbout, in collaboration with Alain Caillé, The World of the Gift, trans. By Donald Winkler (Montréal/Kingston : McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 133.
[368] Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, 27.
[369] Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, 27
[370] Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, 28.
[371] Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, 36

> relationships, which extend and are incorporated into the entire social condition of the individual.[372]

Thus, from this perspective, what is "constrained" and "self-interested" in the gift – to use Mauss's language – has to do with sustaining relationships where mutual responsibilities for the wellbeing of all are engaged.[373] Again, this idea pertains to a relational worldview, as Kuokkanen explains in the following passage.

> In indigenous worldviews that foreground multilayered and multidimensional relationships with the land, the gift is the means through which the socio-cosmic order is renewed and secured. The gift is the manifestation of reciprocity with the natural environment; it reflects the bond of dependency and respect toward the natural world. From this bond, certain responsibilities emerge. In this system, one does not give primarily in order to receive but rather in order to ensure the balance of the world on which the well-being of the entire social order is contingent.[374]

This means that the idea that the gift as a self-interested gesture needs to be reinterpreted in light of this specific understanding of reciprocity. Self and Other have a *shared* interest in the gift that goes beyond their respective self-interest. When it comes to the gift, reciprocity (and responsibility) must not be understood only through the mutuality of the giver/receiver binary as the basic unit of exchange, but through an ongoing and ever changing constellation of relations taking place at once, some ending as others begin. This is what Kuokkanen's discussion of an indigenous relationship with the land means to convey. Furthermore, she insists on the vital importance of this kind of reciprocity: "In reciprocity as practiced in terms of indigenous worldviews, gifts are not given primarily to ensure a countergift later on, but to actively acknowledge kinship and coexistence with the world; without this sort of reciprocity, survival – not just of human beings but of other living beings – would be impossible."[375] All living beings

[372] Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, 32.
[373] Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, 27.
[374] Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, 33.
[375] Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, 38-9

in the world have a shared interest in the movement of gifts, because it perpetuates the ecological balance on which their existences depend.

In order to mark a clear break away from understandings of the gift that are tied to the logic of indebtedness, Kuokkanen goes as far as rejecting the word exchange. For this reason, Kuokkanen does not subscribes to Mauss's representation of the gift, which, like Derrida, she finds resembles too much the logic of indebtedness and contractualism more generally. She argues, "It can of course be suggested that giving is always a form of exchange, in that gifts are exchanged for collective well-being. But here we must do more than consider the act of giving; we must examine more closely the ethos, prevailing values, and ontological context of the gift practice, which can point to something very different from the spirit of gift for gift."[376] While I do not necessarily agree with Kuokkanen that the word exchange needs to be avoided for the sake of widening our understanding of reciprocity and responsibility, and while I have reservations with regards to her reading of Mauss in that sense, these differences are of little importance compared to the broader project of reinterpreting the gift as an approach to relational self-determination. In my view, Kuokkanen's presentation of the gift from the perspective of indigenous epistemes brings an invaluable contribution towards developing an alternative to the understanding of self-determination that is currently hegemonic among non-indigenous peoples.[377] In my analysis, non-indigenous peoples can draw teachings from the indigenous perspective presented by Kuokkanen about how to belong, identify, construct meaning and self-awareness through the gift as a way to create balance in their relationship to themselves, others, and the world around.

[376] Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, 36
[377] Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, 25.

One important lesson that can be learned from considering the gift as a way of sustaining the ecological balance of the world is about the importance of difference and diversity. As an approach to self-determination, the gift enables the co-existence of culturally diverse communities. This is what comes out of Britt Kramvig's work, after she conducted anthropological research in the multi-ethnic area of Smafjord in Norway. According to Kramvig's observation, the gift is a ritualised institution used by the Sami for dealing with cultural diversity in the context of colonial relations of power.[378] What comes out of Kramvig's analysis is a representation of the gift as relational self-determination. Her analysis also speaks to the tension that exists at the heart of the gift and which defines the human condition when she argues: "Through gifting are expressed autonomy, identity, and community beyond ethnicity, while paradoxically, the act of giving creates ethnicity"[379] In my analysis, it is precisely because the gift has this ability to unite parties that are different while also keeping them apart and making a point of their difference that it can be considered an institution supportive of relational self-determination.

More precisely, according to Kramvig's observations, the Sami community of Smafjord uses the gift to address this eternal dilemma: "How to manage our dependency to others while asserting clear limits between the self and them?"[380] The matter of the issue goes beyond the immediate practicality of the exchange. As Kramvig explains, the gift allows one to become visible in the eyes of others.[381] Because of her interest for how it can be used to gain recognition, Kramvig may appear to privilege a more individualistic interpretation than the one of Mauss. I refer in particular to the passages in which she cites Annette B. Weiner, who claims the gift does

[378] Britt Kramvig, "Le language silencieux du don dans les communautés arctiques: 'n'échangez pas votre Bonheur contre la fortune,'" *Ethnologie française*, 39, no. 2, (Apr.-Jun. 2009): 275.
[379] Britt Kramvig, "Le language silencieux du don," 275. My translation.
[380] Britt Kramvig, "Le language silencieux du don," 278. My translation.
[381] Britt Kramvig, "Le language silencieux du don," 278.

not have the power to *transform* the individual parties involved and clearly sides with the notion of the gift as an affirmation of individuality.[382] However, when Kramvig's observations point to the gift's purpose in reconciling things that appear impossible to reconcile – interdependency and the human need for recognition on the one hand and the human aspiration to autonomy on the other one –it really captures the essence of Mauss's contribution to political thought. Kramvig also demonstrates how the gift serves to support – in actuality and in practice – a conception of equality that is substantially different than the notion of equality as sameness that is at the heart of liberal societies.[383] The gift can enable equality and difference to co-exist precisely because it does not require the collapsing of individualities for the sake of creating unity. It ties people together and thus becomes an expression of the general need that the "Self" has for the "Other," but without ever requiring that they become similar. Kramvig concludes her article with this though: "In this isolated multiethnic community, gifting forms a complex system that speaks to the issues of recognition and identity. The gift becomes a performative act allowing building relations, and in this sense, it has the capacity to not only create ethnicity but also to transcend it."[384]

Kramvig's analysis, where the gift is shown to serve apparently contradictory principles, speaks to a tension that exists at its heart. The gift is presented by Mauss as being just as voluntary as it is constrained and self-interested.[385] Much has been written about the obligation to return the gift, thus a tendency among academics to focus primarily on its "mandatory" nature, as exemplified by the work of Sahlins and Derrida. However, this tendency results in

[382] Britt Kramvig, "Le language silencieux du don," 278.
[383] Britt Kramvig, "Le language silencieux du don," 279.
[384] Britt Kramvig, "Le language silencieux du don," 282. My translation.
[385] Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don*, 66.

overlooking how Mauss's essay demonstrates how the gift stands for a complex and, at times, seemingly contradictory set of human intentions, aspirations, and needs. Mauss writes:

> Among all these very complex themes and this multiplicity of social 'things' that are in a state of flux, we seek here to study only one characteristic—one that goes deep but is isolated: the so to speak voluntary character of these total services, apparently free and disinterested but nevertheless constrained and selfinterested. Almost always such services have taken the form of the gift, the present generously given even when, in the gesture accompanying the transaction, there is only a polite fiction, formalism, and social deceit, and when really there is obligation and economic self-interest.[386]

The gift is voluntary, but that does not mean that its ties into social institutions and structures can be ignored. The ambivalence of the gift is the main topic of a recent article by Arul Raj Madalai Muthu. According to him, the contradictions found in the gift are what support its ethical value. Muthu's analysis is based on the observation that a certain degree of ambivalence always defines the day-to-day life of humans. If the gift is to be considered a meaningful principle of social organization, it must echo the contradictions of the human condition and the ambivalence of our lives.[387] For Muthu, there is ethical value to the ambivalence of the gift to the extent that it contributes to fulfilling its role of creating and maintaining social relations and promoting human progress.[388] For Hénaff, "it is about thinking at once constraint and freedom as much in the act of giving than in the one of receiving."[389]

In my analysis, the tension carried by the gift makes it a vector of a type of self-determination that is alternative to the hegemonic sovereignty-based model. The tension that animates the gift is a reflection of the tension that exists between our desire for autonomy and our need to be in relations with others. It is also a reflection of the tension between the human needs, on the one hand, to belong and resemble others, and on the other one, to maintain a

[386] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, trans. W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990), 4.
[387] Arul Raj Madalai Muthu, "The Ambivalence of Gift-Giving," 69.
[388] Arul Raj Madalai Muthu, "The Ambivalence of Gift-Giving," 69.
[389] Marcel Hénaff, "Mauss et l'invention de la réciprocité," *Revue du MAUSS* 2, no. 36 (2010), 73. My translation.

distinct sense of self. Despite widespread claims to the contrary, self-determination as/through sovereignty has been proven vain for resolving this tension, leaving unaddressed the need for a better approach for dealing with it. This approach is found in the gift and the tension it carries within itself. Kramvig's observations of the gift in the multicultural community of Smafjord speak to the challenge of relational self-determination. She demonstrates how the gift can support phenomena of identification, self-awareness, belonging, and meaning construction, which unfold at the point where peoples' need for autonomy come in tension with their interdependency, without necessarily negating one another.

Understanding the gift through relationality is not limited to the Indigenous perspective. There are people among non-indigenous academics, including in Mauss in my analysis, who do not subscribe to interpreting the gift through the assumption of individualism and the associated contractual logic and rather see in it a mechanism for cooperation across differences. It is the case of Alan D. Schrift, who in the introduction to the book *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethics of Generosity* takes a strong stance in favour of re-envisioning the gift in a way that favours rejecting the ideal of the autonomy of the political subject and adopting an intersubjective perspective on the human. Schrift asks, "Could we escape the limits of the Hegelian ideal of autonomy – the *nomos* of the *autos* – as a law of the self, which might make it possible to exceed the limits of ourselves and enter into the between of self and other without losing ourselves in the process?"[390] Schrift's position implies an understanding of reciprocity that resonates with the one of Kuokkanen.

> To free ourselves from the oppositional logic of "self vs. all others" might allow for our selfconstruction as something other than isolated and atomistic subjectivities. Freed from the constraints of an atomistic and autonomous individualism, might possibilities be opened for establishing non-proprietary relations of cooperative

[390] Alan D. Schrift, "Introduction: Why Gift?" 20.

> ownership in which a fully intersubjective self could be at home in the between of self and other?[391]

Schrift is arguing for the development of an ethic of generosity, but it is clear from this passage that the ethic he envisions runs deeper than the personal actions or choices of an individual subject. It questions the possibility of individuality and opens the self to its dependency on reciprocity with others.

In a book written in collaboration with Alain Caillé, Godbout also takes issue with the tendency to reduce the gift to a contract or an instance of the market economy and to assume that the sole motivation behind it must be the self-interest of a calculating subject.[392] While he agrees that a totally free gift is impossible, he rejects the idea of a mere system of self-interested exchange.[393] He claims that, on the contrary, the "archaic gift" described by Mauss is a reality "with its own coherence, one that cannot be reduced to anything but itself."[394] Subscribing to the Maussian notion of total social phenomenon, and following an analysis by Mary Douglas, Godbout claims that the gift "serves above all to establish relations."[395] According to Godbout, the gift is based on the idea that "the entire world, whether social or animal or cosmic, can only become and organize itself as a result of gifts made between people, between vital principles or powers that are essentially antagonistic but that the gift succeeds in transforming into allies. It is the refusal of the gift or its return to sender that risks unleashing that potential for evil common to every power and every being, bringing on chaos, sterility, and death."[396] Godbout's perspective seems to echo Muthu's claim that the gift's purpose is served by its ambiguity. Godbout also insists that the gift proceeds from a vision of the world as heterogeneous, "made of irreducible

[391] Alan D. Schrift, "Introduction: Why Gift?" 20.
[392] Jacques T. Godbout and Alain Caillé, *The World of the Gift*, trans. Donald Winkler (Montréal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 4-7.
[393] Jacques T. Godbout and Alain Caillé, *The World of the Gift*, 130.
[394] Jacques T. Godbout and Alain Caillé, *The World of the Gift*, 130.
[395] Jacques T. Godbout and Alain Caillé, *The World of the Gift*, 7.
[396] Jacques T. Godbout and Alain Caillé, *The World of the Gift*, 132.

particularities."[397] He further explains, "Unlike mercantile exchange, the gift does not link entities that are equal a priori and by right, or whose equivalence may be calculated."[398] For Godbout the gift produces parity rather than equality, and, he further insists, it does so "only a posteriori, ex post, and then only after having acknowledged and drawn attention to basic initial differences."[399] This passage seems to be in agreement with the observations made by Kramvig on the ability of the gift to at once support the self's identity and interdependency with others.

For all the authors discussed in this section, the gift pertains to a vision of the world that is heterogeneous. Keeping in mind that the gift is for Mauss a total social fact, the idea of the gift carrying within itself the principle of difference as a fundamental characteristic of the world suggests that self-determination depends on upholding differences rather than erasing them. This is confirmed by Asch's interpretation of Mauss. As Asch explains, "society cannot be constructed by Self alone."[400] According to his perspective, self-determination is only made possible by entering in relations with another self that is different from self. Otherness is vital, but the need to be in relation with it is shared by all and makes us similar to each other. Asch's work on Levi-Strauss's theoretical perspective on *The Gift*, further illuminates how "for society to exist, it is necessary for Self and Other to join in a common project in which it is essential for both to respect and maintain each other's distinctiveness and autonomy."[401] The gift's essential purpose is found in this that it binds peoples and creates commonality by way of asserting their respective differences.

This interpretation is also shared by philosopher and anthropologist Marcel Hénaff. Ironically, Hénaff is of the authors who see the Maussian gift, or what he more specifically calls

[397] Jacques T. Godbout and Alain Caillé, *The World of the Gift*, 132.
[398] Jacques T. Godbout and Alain Caillé, *The World of the Gift*, 132.
[399] Jacques T. Godbout and Alain Caillé, *The World of the Gift*, 132.
[400] Michael Asch, "Levi-Strauss and the Political, 429.
[401] Michael Asch, "Levi-Strauss and the Political, 426.

the ceremonial gift,[402] fundamentally agonistic.[403] Like Sahlins, he puts a lot of emphasis on the passage in which Mauss opposes the gift to war. Unlike Sahlins, however, Hénaff does not think the gift forms a contract, even if Mauss himself sometimes uses the term.[404] When the gift is concerned, "it has to do with a different realm involving social relations that are at once broader and more fundamental."[405] For Hénaff, the meaning of the gift is revealed when considered in its interaction with alterity. According to his interpretation, peoples use the gift to initiate a relationship with other peoples they recognize as irreducibly different. The gift is presented as what allows us to get out of ourselves to encounter others – a necessity in the homogeneous world we live in. Hénaff claims, "Any human society originates in this gesture towards outside the self, by the acceptance of what is different from self; it is only possible under the condition of alterity.[406] Rather than trying to override or exclude difference, the gift proceeds from the recognition that interdependence across difference is a necessity to the existence of peoples. Reading Mauss, like Asch, through the lens of Levi-Strauss's theory of exogamy, Hénaff claims, "society exists only under the requirement of alterity which implies a universal principle of reciprocity."[407] Explored through the perspective of its interaction with alterity, the gift becomes a complex social system meant to create conditions of reciprocity. Hénaff argues, "This requirement of alterity defines at once a common ontology of existence – based on the constitutive difference of persons and groups – but also on an ethics of respect and obligation towards others."[408] Accordingly, Hénaff suggests we should adopt a non dualiste, non

[402] Marcel Hénaff, "I/You: Reciprocity, Gift-giving, and the Third Party," *META: Res. in Herm., Phen., and Pract. Philosophy* 2, no.1 (2010).
[403] Marcel Hénaff, "Don cérémoniel, paradoxe de l'altérité et reconnaissance réciproque," *Revue d'éthique et de théologie morale* no. 281 (2014), 58.
[404] Marcel Hénaff, "Mauss et l'invention de la réciprocité," 84.
[405] Marcel Hénaff, "Mauss et l'invention de la réciprocité," 75. My translation.
[406] Marcel Hénaff, "Don cérémoniel, paradoxe de l'altérité et reconnaissance réciproque," 63. My translation.
[407] Marcel Hénaff, "Don cérémoniel, paradoxe de l'altérité et reconnaissance réciproque," 62. My translation.
[408] Marcel Hénaff, "Don cérémoniel, paradoxe de l'altérité et reconnaissance réciproque," 63. My translation.

antagonistic understanding of reciprocity – one that fosters solidarity and trust across differences and generations.[409] The understanding of reciprocity that Hénaff claims is representative of Mauss's thought is closer to Kuokkanen's definition than to the symmetrical one carried by the notion of exchange. In this sense, Hénaff's work on Mauss's work contributes to an interpretation of the gift as a model for relational self-determination. There is one point, however, on which I disagree with Hénaff, and it has to do with the role of the state in Mauss's political thought. For Hénaff, the state is in responsible for arbitrating the competing interests that may collide in the play of gift exchange.[410] I believe the thinkers who find in *The Gift* evidence to support the universality of the state have a more plausible thesis.

Indeed, there are authors who question the widely accepted idea that the state is the paramount model of governance for life in common, and who point to the gift as proof that it is possible to live in a stateless society. For example, Godbout thinks that the state not only belongs to a different world than the gift, operating on the basis of very different principles but "it can often have a negative impact on the gift."[411] In *The Gift*, Mauss tries to demonstrate that stateless societies are not static or embryonic, contrary to what is predominantly suggested by modern Western political thought and its privileging of the state form. One of the key characteristics of self-determination in the state form is a specific understanding of human reason in its relation to the law. By contrast, the purpose of *The Gift* is to argue that life in common is possible on the basis of alternative stateless systems and worldviews.

[409] Marcel Hénaff, "Mauss et l'invention de la réciprocité," 83-5.
[410] Marcel Hénaff, "Mauss et l'invention de la réciprocité," 85.
[411] Jacques T. Godbout and Alain Caillé, *The World of the Gift*, 52.

Conclusion

One of the main ideas that I think need to be taken away from reading The Gift is that the self-determination of peoples is always inter-societal. Looking into the origins of society, Mauss finds that it only comes into existence through gift exchange as a way to mediate the play of alterity. The "Self" cannot exist on its own, but it cannot exist either by assimilating to the "Other." The gift serves to establish a relationship between self and other that is based on an open-ended notion of reciprocity. The gift challenges the predominance of individuality in our understanding of self-determination. As the section on Sahlins's interpretation of *The Gift* shows how pervasive Hobbes's idea are when thinking about self-determination and the origin of society. This is further supported by the fact that Sahlins' interpretation remains heavily cited decades after its publication. In particular, the assumption that sovereign individualism is the source of self-determination remains very strong. As for Derrida, he wants to unsettle the part attributed to the notion of intentionality in the gift. He also accuses the Maussian gift of operating by way of indebtedness. Mauss's concern for reciprocity is here mistakenly presented in connection with notions of closure and certainty. But the Maussian gift can only be perceived for what it is if we abandon ideal of sovereignty, along with closure and certainty. As the last section of the chapter demonstrates, there is an emerging field of interpretation that focuses on the gift as a way to cultivate relationships with other and the natural world. The authors cited in this last section may have different perspectives on *The Gift* and Mauss's contribution more generally, but they share a vision of the gift in which its political significance is conveyed by its role in sustaining relations of self-determination among different partners.

Chapter Five: On the Ethos of Indigenous Treaty Philosophy

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce a non-indigenous settler audience (primarily Québécois but not only) to how treaties, when they are understood and practiced from an Indigenous worldview, can support an alternative relational approach to self-determination. When sustained by the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy, treaties rest on a conception of the self that is deeply relational, similar to the one found in Mauss's work on gifting. In my understanding, the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy implies seeing the world as being made of countless relations in which the self is embedded. Accordingly, self-determination through treaty is understood as unfolding within the limits and possibilities that the interdependency of all beings bears. The ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy as presented in the work of Indigenous scholars does not only convey a conception of the self that is radically different from the one that emerged in Europe as a result of the development of modern Western political thought, it also presents an alternative approach for interacting across differences. As I understand it, this is because it proceeds from a radically different appreciation of the value of difference for politics. Consequently, as I argue in this chapter, Indigenous treaty philosophy opens the realm of possibilities when it comes to self-determine in a diverse, ever-changing world in which we live in interdependency. The purpose of my chapter is to draw the attention of Québécois people to the meaning of treaty from an Indigenous perspective. The history of Québec begins with the historical treaties and other alliances of peace and friendship between Indigenous peoples and French settlers. In this sense, I argue that we have a collective responsibility to learn about the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy and what it entails for Québécois self-determination.

The argument presented in this chapter is articulated around the idea that Indigenous treaty philosophy has pedagogical value for transforming settlers' approach to self-determination. There is a simple reason for this standpoint: in order for settlers to adopt a relational perspective on who they are and transform their colonial ways of self-determination, they must first realize that there are other ways of thinking about self-determination. The teachings contained in Indigenous treaty philosophy have the potential to transform one's views regarding the self and self-determination. As treaty partners, settlers' responsibility is bound to learning to live up to the obligation of reciprocity that is implied by the ethos of Indigenous philosophy. In order to do this, we must turn away from the understanding of treaties that prevails in Canadian and Québécois colonial legal and political systems. According to Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "destabilizing and decolonizing the concept of "treaty" [is] paramount to appreciate what our ancestors intended to happen when those very first agreements and relationships were established, and to explore the meaning of Indigenous views of "treaty" and "treaty relationships" in contemporary times."[412] This is what this chapter is about, exploring the relevance of Indigenous views of "treaty" and "treaty relationships" for settler self-determination and to contribute to the decolonization of our relations.

When the Europeans entered into treaty relations with the Indigenous communities whose land they were moving in, there must have been an expectation on the part of these communities that the newcomers would accept and learn the teachings conveyed by treaty about how to live well on the land with others. It is impossible to speculate whether people at the time of contact were aware that they held different understandings of human nature and self-determination. It can be argued, however, that if Québécois showed openness to learning from the Indigenous

[412] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa: Precolonial Nishnaabeg Dilpomatic and Treaty Relationships," *Wicazo Sa Review* 23, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 30.

teachings contained in those treaty relationships and alliances, the relationship between Indigenous and Québécois settlers could be different. As the authors cited in this chapter show, the transformative potential of treaty philosophy is not a thing of the past and the ethos of those treaties and alliances is no less important today than it was then. Unfortunately, the teachings have not been welcomed and learned in any meaningful way and it is the hegemonic modern Western approach to self-determination that prevails.

The implications of treaty for Québécois self-determination and the idea of an obligation to learn about the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy are analyzed in light of notions of the gift, reciprocity, and responsibility, as discussed in the previous chapter. In this sense, I argue that a gift of hospitality has been offered by Indigenous peoples to the European settlers when those were accepted as treaty partners. I also argue that this gift that lies at the very foundation of Québécois society has implications for the self-determination of the Québécois people to this day and for the future. Hospitality is not free; to be a guest comes with certain responsibilities. Despite that Québécois have so far primarily responded to the gift of hospitality by always seeking to further their sovereignty and position as settlers, the obligation that is on us to reciprocate the gift remains. The question is what form would a return on such a foundational gift possibly take? To put it differently, what are the terms of a reciprocal relationship given the context of colonialism within which that question is being raised? More than one answer are possible, but mostly this is not a question that can answered unilaterally from the settler perspective. With that in mind, I suggest that for any solution to fulfill the transformative potential that is needed in order to move beyond colonialism, it must get to the core of Québécois self-determination and re-envision the self in light of its role and responsibilities as a treaty partner. In this sense, and considering what has been argued in chapter four regarding the

Maussian notion of the gift, it is worth recalling that reciprocating the gift of hospitality should be done for the purpose of renewing the ongoing relationship that the original gift initiated, not to bring it to a point of closure. Settlers need to be aware that this is not about getting even, nor is it about finding a final resolution to Indigenous claims so the project of Québécois self-determination can be pursued in an unencumbered manner. Accordingly, I argue that one of the first steps towards reciprocating the gift of hospitality is to learn about how to become more open to the reciprocity on which we depend as relational being and starting to reinvision Québécois self-determination from the perspective of treaty.

Reciprocity can never be achieved without learning to see relationality differently than only as a thing that makes us vulnerable and without changing our sense of self accordingly. Decolonisation is to a great extent a matter of changing the settlers' perspective on self-determination. This is particularly important with regards to the issue of the interaction between settler and Indigenous self-determination. Any efforts towards decolonization will remain vain, unless rooted in a conception of the self that is not modeled along the precepts of modern sovereign individualism. To put it differently, for as long as Québécois settlers are going to keep self-determining in relation to the ideals of sovereignty and invulnerability, and unless a profound transformation of the power dynamics affecting the interactions between settler and Indigenous self-determination takes place, decolonization will remain unattainable. We can only be grateful that this does not need to happen in a vacuum. Indeed, as treaty partners we are given a context to anchor our efforts towards expanding our understanding of what it means to be self-determined outside of the logic of sovereignty. I have already defined self-determination as a process that involves at once an aspiration to freedom or independence *and* interdependency. Whereas the logic of sovereignty calls for emancipation from interdependency as possible to

achieve autonomy, the authors cited in this chapter tend to show that when approached from an Indigenous perspective, allow for the realization of both dependency and interdependency. As Margaret Kovach argues, " treaty philosophy does not argue against the contradictions that define the tensions of freedom."[413]

The scholarship referenced in this chapter extends beyond the Québécois context. It is crucial that Québécois people, like all other settlers, become better educated about the obligations and rights that fall on them as a result of living in a specific location covered by a specific treaty. Yet, when it comes to learning about the Indigenous perspective on treaty making, we may draw insight from a broader outlook by not limiting our engagement to what is local to us. I see three main reasons for this.

Firstly, as far as I understand it, one of the main ideas that settlers must learn from Indigenous treaty philosophy is the interconnectedness of all beings in the world. Thus, as we learn about our interconnectedness with others and the world around, it is helpful to draw from treaties, including the ones to which we are not actual partners. To argue this point I refer to the book *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan* by Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, for which they interviewed Elders from different nations: Cree, Dene, Assiniboine, and Saulteaux. According to the two authors, as well as the Elders interviewed, the similarities they share in terms of their spirituality, philosophies, legal traditions, and teachings are very significant. They claim, "there is an interconnectedness (ê-miciminitômakahki) among the sacred ceremonies, teachings, and beliefs of First Nations."[414] In this sense, although the book is about the numbered treaties of Saskatchewan, the teachings it contains are at once more specific and general. More specific

[413] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies: Re-imagining Indigenous Presence in the Classroom," *Socialist Studies/Études socialistes* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 114.
[414] Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan* (Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 2000), 9

because each interviewed Elder is speaking from their lived experience. More general because the commonalities identified amongst the nations of Saskatchewan may apply to other Indigenous contexts. I think that one thing that is important for settlers is to be exposed to the expression of Indigenous worldviews about the process of treaty making and the realization that the logic of modern Western sovereignty is not only different from these worldviews, but detrimental to them. Indigenous people's willingness to share their knowledge and teachings is something that cannot be taken for granted, given settlers' general historical lack of consideration for those teachings. Québécois settlers should see it as a gift to learn from Elders about what the treaties and the process of treaty making means to them, whether they are from Saskatchewan or elsewhere. The Elders' willingness to share their knowledge and teachings is a gift can help transform colonial relations in Québec.

Secondly, there is a growing field of works being produced on treaties from both Indigenous and non-indigenous academics. This is accompanied with an enhanced expectation that settlers will learn about this aspect of their history and become honourable treaty partners. This growing body of work is predominantly written in English, but this does not mean that the Québécois are exempted from the obligation to learn. The fact that there simply are not as many authors and scholars writing about treaties in French than there are in English should not limit our efforts to understand the meaning of the historical treaties and alliances of peace and friendship. Moreover, it is not because work is produced in a different language than our own that Québécois people are not being directly addressed as settlers. As a people whose very presence in North America is dependent on being treaty partners, everything that is being written about treaties and treaty philosophy is potentially directed at the Québécois people. When Indigenous authors address settlers as treaty partners and call them to realize that their position

on this land today can only be legitimized by honouring the treaties that gave them permission to be here in the first place, they are addressing the Québécois as well, regardless of the language that is being used. I am not denying that work needs to be done in French towards building an understanding of treaty ethos that is local to Québec. However, I argue that there are also overlapping realities that cross over the language divide and that we can learn important lessons by paying attention to what Indigenous and non-indigenous authors have written in English about treaties.

Thirdly, I argue that when it comes to learning about relational self-determination, it may be necessary for Québécois to draw not only on the treaties and alliances that were made with France, but also with other European powers. The treaties and alliances that were made between the French and Indigenous peoples form the foundations of Québécois society. That being said, in order for a profound transformation of Québécois self-determination to take place, we must reflect on Indigenous peoples' openness to become treaty partners with people who were different from them. It is in this openness that the gift of hospitality is contained. As I argued previously, the question of co-existence with alterity is at the heart of the difference between self-determination as/through sovereignty and relational self-determination. My understanding of the literature on treaty from an Indigenous perspective is that Indigenous peoples use treaties for making the co-existence of different peoples possible, by establishing an on-going relationship between partners who remain nonetheless independent. If this is the case, then it proceeds from approach to self-determination that is profoundly different from the one that is rooted in the logic of sovereignty. Accordingly, I argue that learning about what is at stake for settler self-determination by showing hospitality to difference does not need to be limited to treaties made with the French. It is not the *specific differences between the French and Indigenous peoples* that

matter, but the idea of difference more generally and the teachings on how to co-exist in peace, respect, and harmony.

I am not suggesting that approaching treaty relations through the lens of pedagogy and as a gift of hospitality should replace all other perspectives or interpretations of treaties and treaty philosophy more generally. Nor am I suggesting that the pedagogical value of treaties for transforming settlers' approach to self-determination constitutes the essence of treaty politics. When discussing treaties, it is not uncommon for various theories or interpretations to intersect or clash, more or less profoundly. Treaties can be intended, interpreted, or implemented as a protocol of co-existence and sharing,[415] a colonial tool for right extinguishment and dispossession[416], a legal requirement in historical international law for securing claims to a territory,[417] a key to legal certainty, a formal contract, a compact between sovereign nations,[418] or a mechanism for implementing Indigenous diplomacy.[419] The list is not exhaustive, and more than one of these views of treaties can intersect and overlap at any given moment. The purpose of my proposed interpretation is not to supersede those other representations or to try to resolve the debates on what a treaty is and how it should be interpreted. Rather, I aim to add another possible interpretation that has the potential of informing a settler reflection on the role of treaty partners today. That being said, there is one way of representing treaty relations that I wish to address before getting to my main argument, namely the representation of treaties as nation-to-nation relations.

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[415] Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, 7.
[416] René Boudreault, *Du mépris au respect* mutuel, 41.
[417] James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson, "The Context of the State of Nature," in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and* Vision, ed. Marie Battiste (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 25-6; Michel Morin, *L'usurpation de la souveraineté autochtone* (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 1997).
[418] James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson, "The Context of the State of Nature," 23.
[419] Gilles Havard, *La grande paix de Montréal de 1701: Les voies de la diplomatie franco-amérindienne* (Montréal: Recherches amérindiennes au Québec, 1992).

My understanding of the notion of a nation-to-nation relationship is that it asserts the equality of people of European descent and Indigenous peoples, and that the that latter were, and continue to be, living in fully organized political communities with their own systems of governance and law. Implied in this representation of treaties is the idea that Indigenous communities were and continue to be self-governed and independent. According to some of the authors cited in this chapter, it also rules out the possibility of land cessation. As far as I underderstand it, the idea of a nation-to-nation relationship stresses the importance of maintaining balance between partners who retain their freedom. It speaks to the political standing of these communities prior to and after forming treaty relationship with the French, because Indigenous peoples' status as nations is independent from their interactions with settlers. The nation-to-nation terminology suggests that there is nothing inevitable about Indigenous nations' relations with the Europeans. In other words, referring to treaties as nation-to-nation relations stresses the idea that settlers do not have any right to claim authority over Indigenous peoples. The idea that treaties are nation-to-nation relations is often accompanied by the notion of treaties as mutual recognition of sovereignty.

Generally, in the context of Indigenous scholarship, the expression is used to describe a culturally situated understanding of nationhood and sovereignty, which I have no reason or authority to object. I personally avoid using similar language in my own work because it is exactly the same as the one used by settlers in the pursuit of closure, homogeneity, and exclusivity. As far as I understand, these ideals of settler self-determination and the treaty ethos that I present in this chapter are opposed. As Asch argues, in order for settlers to fully grasp what is meant when Indigenous peoples describe treaty as nation-to-nation relations, "it requires that we move away from the strain of political thought based on the understanding that the

determination of sovereignty over a territory is the surest building block on which to establish political relations between nations."[420] My own work is a contribution towards developing an understanding that would no longer rely on sovereignty for our self-determination. That being said, my own avoidance of the term nation-to-nation should not be interpreted as an objection to or even a critique of work by people who use this terminology. At the core of my work is that idea that people of different cultures and backgrounds have the capacity to form mutual understanding across differences if they want to. Contrary to Hobbes, who claims humans need a sovereign to rule over their disagreement about the meaning of words, I trust that people can develop political skills to work out situations where they mean different things when using the same words or vice versa. Accordingly, I think people who use the term nation-to-nation to describe a relationship that is guided by the treaty ethos discussed in this chapter are contributing to our understanding of that ethos and sharing a vision from which I can learn.

Treaty Is a Pre-colonial Tradition

The scope of Indigenous treaty philosophy is of course wider than Indigenous/settler relations, and the Indigenous tradition of inter-cultural alliances long pre-dates the Europeans' arrival. Indeed, the long pre-colonial tradition of treaty making is confirmed by Alan Corbiere's work on the history of wampum belts. Although he mentions that the word belt is inaccurate, Corbiere insists on the diplomatic importance of these sacred objects that were used by different communities "all around the great lakes" and "into the plains"[421] long before the Europeans' arrival. Corbiere cites the Mohawk, Mi'kmaq, and Anishinaabe as peoples using wampum belts

[420] Michael Asch, *On Being Here to Stay: Treaties and Aboriginal Rights in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 7.
[421] Alan Ojiig Corbiere, *The Underlying Importance of Wampum Belts* (YouTube) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wb-RftTCQ_8, accessed 30 March, 2015.

to records intercultural alliances.[422] Typically, wampum belts display visual representations of the peoples involved, the terms of their commitment, and their relationship to the territory where the alliance is taking place. Belts that were made later on to record different alliances with European peoples, such as the Silver Covenant Chain and Two Row Wampum, are based on visual symbols that were already in use as part of Indigenous diplomacy and that have been passed on and reconfigured.[423] Thus, Corbiere's work situates these alliances within a broader Indigenous diplomatic tradition. But the belts were not in themselves sufficient to seal treaties, and Corbiere explains that they need to be accompanied by the oral reciting of their meaning on a regular basis. This is why traditionally the partners would try to get together once a year to recall and renew their treaty relationship and the terms of their agreement to living in harmony. Based on Corbière's description, treaties appear to be ongoing relationships that need to be actively perpetuated and cared for by the partners.

This long tradition of treaty making is also documented by Leanne Simpson, who points to its role in "making and maintaining peaceful diplomatic relationships."[424] Simpson argues that this tradition was and continues to be "governed by the common Indigenous ethics of justice, peace, respect, reciprocity, and accountability."[425] For Simpson, when treaty relations are "viewed through the lens of Indigenous worldviews, values, and traditional political cultures,"[426] their sacredness and spiritual character become apparent. At the heart of these worldviews there is an obligation to maintain good relationships with the land, the "animal nations,"[427] and other peoples. This obligation, according to Simpson, is part of Anishinaabe conception of the good

[422] Alan Ojiig Corbiere, *The Underlying Importance of Wampum Belts.*
[423] Alan Ojiig Corbiere, *The Underlying Importance of Wampum Belts.*
[424] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa," 29.
[425] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa," 29.
[426] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa," 29.
[427] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa," 31.

life – something that is conveyed through the notion of *Bimaadiziwin*, itself carried through the seven Grandfather teachings. (I explain more about the Anishinaabe seven Grandfather or Grandmother teachings below.) Simpson insists that, traditionally, there was reciprocity between individual and collective responsibility towards all living beings, and that relations to the animal nations were "negotiated, ritualized, and nurtured,"[428] as they too have self-determination. These relations were carried through treaty alliances that continue to be renewed to this day, and their ongoing reciprocal character sustains "peaceful coexistence, respect, and mutual benefit.[429] From this perspective, treaty relations support the interdependency of different living beings while upholding their differences for the sake of reciprocity. Simpson states:

> Oral agreements based on relationship, negotiation, and understanding required plenty of maintenance and nurturing to ensure lasting peace. That maintenance required commitment and hard work, but also encouraged understanding another point of view and when done correctly can bring about a lasting peace for all involved.[430]

Another example of pre-colonial treaty making presented by Simpson is *Gdoo-naaganinaa* (or Our Dish), a treaty between the Haudenosaunee[431] and Anishinaabe for sharing resources over a common hunting territory.[432] She claims that the dish represents the shared territory where the partners recognized each other a right to hunt and extract resources for their living. For Simpson, *Gdoo-naaganinaa* "represented [the] harmony and interconnection"[433] of the partners, without ever implying a right to interfere in each other's affairs. She insists that it engages the respective responsibilities of the partners into a mutually beneficial alliance.

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[428] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa," 33.
[429] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa," 35.
[430] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa," 35.
[431] The Huadenosauna are a confederacy made of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca. It is also known as the Iroquois Confederacy.
[432] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa," 38.
[433] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa," 37.

According to Simpson, pre-colonial practices of treaty making with animal and human communities provide "important insights into the kind of relationship our ancestors intended to have, and intended us to have with settler governments."[434] Additionally, her and Corbiere's works (among others) bring settlers' position as treaty partners into perspective by showing how there was nothing exclusive in those relations.[435] Indeed, as Andrée Lajoie argues, in their early alliances with local communities, the French had to accept that their position was nothing more than the one of any other partner.[436] The Indigenous communities that French settlers encountered were self-determined with complex systems of governance and a long-established intercultural diplomatic tradition of treaty making.

Examples of early alliances in Québec

Although I draw in this chapter from sources that discuss treaties from different areas and times, I do so against the backdrop of a reflection on the early context of colonialism. Without being a historian, the contribution I offer as a settler political theorist is furthered by taking into account power relations between Europeans and Indigenous peoples before the consolidation of settler power. Today, the Québécois majority controls state institutions and it is easy to forget that things were not always that way. Albeit often unconsciously, settlers accept for true the Hobbesian tale of the emergence of modern sovereignty out of chaos and the idea that the state originates in a dangerous sort of radical equality. The problem is that this has nothing to do with the actual origins of Québécois and Canadian societies. Rather, the historical context that resulted in the creation of treaties between European settlers and local Indigenous communities

[434] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa," 36.
[435] Gilles Havard, *La grande paix de Montréal de 1701*, 23.
[436] Andrée Lajoie "Synthèse introductive," introduction to *Le statut juridique des peuples autochtones au Québec et le pluralisme,* eds. Andrée Lajoie et al (Cowansville: Les Éditions Yvon Blais, 1996), 35.

was one of vulnerability and dependence of the former on the latter.[437] As the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People argues, the period of time that followed to arrival of Europeans was one when "Aboriginal people provided assistance to the newcomers to help them survive in the unfamiliar environment."[438] As James Tully claims, "Canada is founded on an act of generosity that is almost unimaginable in its generosity. The Aboriginal peoples shared their food, hunting and agricultural techniques, practical knowledge, trade routes and geographic knowledge with the needy newcomers. Without this the first immigrants would have been unable to survive."[439] It is also known from Jacques Cartier and Champlain's memoirs that the assistance offered to the first French immigrants was vital.[440] It seems that the assistance that was offered pertains to the realm of gifting in the sense intended by Mauss, and I argue that this should be reflected in Québécois self-determination.

When Indigenous peoples and settlers needed to establish political principles of peaceful co-existence, it is the Indigenous tradition of treaty making that prevailed. The RCAP describes the period after the Europeans' arrival as a situation where the social, cultural, and political differences of each group were respected, as well as their ability to govern their own internal affairs, while there would also be cooperation and intercultural alliances over matters of mutual interest.[441] The RCAP also claims that this era was predominantly defined by mutual tolerance and respect.[442] The idea is not to deny the colonial nature of the situation, but to bring to settlers' understanding of self-determination this historical notion that, before the state, there was a time when the French position in North America was relatively weak and settlers were dependent on

[437] Bernard Assiniwi, *Histoire des Indiens du Haut et du Bas Canada*, Vol. 2 (Ottawa : Les Éditions Leméac, 1974).
[438] Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, quoted in Kiera L. Ladner, "Visions of Neo-Colonialism?: Renewing the Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 21 (2001): 122.
[439] James Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 244-5.
[440] Jacques Cartier, *Voyages au Canada* (Montréal: Lux Éditeur, 2002); Alain Beaulieu and Réal Ouellet, eds., Champlain, *Des Sauvages* (Montréal : Éditions TYPO, 1993).
[441] Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, quoted in Kiera L. Ladner, "Visions of Neo-Colonialism?," 122.
[442] Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, quoted in Kiera L. Ladner, "Visions of Neo-Colonialism?," 122.

making alliances with Indigenous peoples.[443] Indeed, according to Robert A. Williams Jr., there was once a time when the Europeans did not have a choice but to give credit to and respect the Indigenous vision of co-existence based on trust, solidarity, and respect.[444]

The French crown initially intended to unilaterally assert its sovereignty, but it had to adjust to political reality of this new environment, where it was never able to acquire ownership of the land or subjugate Indigenous peoples.[445] The evolution of colonial objectives from unilateral conquest to wanting to build alliances is made clear by the work of historian Mathieu d'Avignon on different letters patent appointing colonial representatives in the early stages of the French colony. As d'Avignon explains, in 1540, Francis I sent Jacques Cartier to America with two main objectives: conquer lands (regardless of whether they were occupied or not) and convert to Catholicism Indigenous peoples, whom the king considered to have no knowledge of God or reason.[446] Those letters patent leave no doubt on the King's lack of consideration for Indigenous peoples' self-determination and title to the land. Those objectives were for the most part reaffirmed half a century later in letters patent appointing Troilus de La Roche de Mesgouez.[447] Yet, despite what those documents state, it is established that the will of kings could never be materialized and that the reality on the ground tended more towards co-operation than what the official archives suggest. This context explains the shift that took place in 1603. At that time, Henri IV explicitly recognized Indigenous peoples as sovereign and independent[448]

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443 Andrée Lajoie and Pierre Verville, "Les traités d'alliance entre les Français et les Premières Nations sous le régime français," *Le statut juridique des peuples autochtones au Québec et le pluralisme,* eds. Andrée Lajoie et al (Cowansville: Les Éditions Yvon Blais, 1996), 155-6.
444 Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Linking Arms Together* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5.
445 Andrée Lajoie "Synthèse introductive," 36.
446 Mathieu d'Avignon, "L'alliance franco-montagnaise de 1603: un événement fondateur méconnu de l'histoire du Québec." in *A-t-on oublié que jadis nous étions « frères » ? Alliances fondatrices et reconnaissance des peuples autochtones dans l'histoire du Québec,* eds Mathieu d'Avignon et Camil Girard (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2009), 66.
447 Mathieu d'Avignon, "L'alliance franco-montagnaise de 1603," 66-7.
448 Mathieu d'Avignon, "L'alliance franco-montagnaise de 1603," 68.

and instructed Pierre Dugua to form treaties of peace and friendship (without going as far as not granting him the right to conduct war). As a result, the nature of relations with Indigenous communities considerably changed after 1603. Without denying that the French crown's ultimate intention was to rule over and assimilate the local populations,[449] D'Avignon argues that after that date, the overall attitude towards them was predominantly one of respect and openness, as well as recognition of their self-determination.[450] The French presence in North America was only possible thank to those alliances. Indeed, according to Camil Girard and Carl Brisson, the French settlement in North America was dependent on "associating with Indigenous peoples as independent peoples with whom the Crown agreed to treaty for the benefit of peace, friendship, and alliances."[451] Throughout the French regime and after, the self-determination of Indigenous peoples was always maintained, even as their material and economical dependency on settlers grew.[452] This is argued by Gilles Havard, who studied the interplay of diplomatic relations leading to the Great Peace of Montreal of 1701 and for whom "[i]n order to understand the history of relations between Europeans and Indigenous peoples, it is necessary to distinguish between theory and practice."[453] Havard further claims:

> [I]n reality, the nature of these relations, by which it can be seen that colonies and nations negotiated and collaborated in networks of alliances, stands as a negation of the notion of European sovereignty, according to which traditionally a king does not trade with his subjects, but subjects them to his authority by imposing his law and collecting tax.[454]

At this point, I recall the fifth aspect of the vulnerability framework exposed in chapter one according to which humans are vulnerable to the extent that self-determination is never pure

[449] Mathieu d'Avignon, "L'alliance franco-montagnaise de 1603," 69.
[450] Mathieu d'Avignon, "L'alliance franco-montagnaise de 1603," 69.
[451] Camil Girard et Carl Brisson, *Nistassinan notre terre*," 36. My translation.
[452] Andrée Lajoie and Pierre Verville, "Les traités d'alliance entre les Français et les Premières Nations sous le régime français,"172.
[453] Gilles Havard, *La Grande Paix de Montréal de 1701*, 23. My translation.
[454] Gilles Havard, *La Grande Paix de Montréal de 1701*, 23. My translation.

matter of will. The *type* of relationships we entertain with others and the world around is more important in self-determination than our will to be a certain way or another. The hegemonic idea within modern Western political thought is that uncertainty leads to vulnerability. I argue that this is something settlers need to keep in mind when reflecting on the fact that the French crown's intentions, as exposed in the work of D'Avignon on the letters patent of 1540 and 1598, could never be actualized. It was assumed at first that settlers' interactions with Indigenous peoples could be unilaterally determined by colonial will. Indeed, as D'Avignon and Girard observe, "Everything is done as if drawing, writing, and leaving traces were sufficient to create this new European world on the whole American territory."[455] Too often, settlers embrace a vision of history that serves to confirm this idea that will and self-determination are bound, but the origins of Québec self-determination are grounded in inter-cultural alliances that reflect interdependency and vulnerability. Long before Québec self-determination was even a thing, French self-determination in North America was relational in the sense that it was dependent on keeping good relations with Indigenous peoples.

The Treaty of Tadoussac of 1603

The Treaty of Tadoussac is an alliance that was made between the representatives of the French crown and the Innu chief Anadabijou in 1603.[456] According to historians, it is the first treaty to be documented in the history of relations between the French and Indigenous peoples.[457] This alliance is a direct consequence of the change of royal colonial policy mentioned above. More

[455] Mathieu d'Avignon et Camil Girard, "Présentation" in *A-t-on oublié que jadis nous étions « frères »*," 3. My translation.
[456] Camil Girard et Carl Brisson, *Nistassinan notre terre,* 46.
[457] Camil Girard et Edith Gagné, "Première alliance interculturelle. Rencontre entre Montagnais et Français à Tadoussac en 1603," *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 25, no. 3 (1995).

importantly, it shows how the French adopted Innu protocols and diplomatic symbolism in the process of officialising their agreement.

As Champlain explains in his memoir *Des Sauvages*, the French people present accepted the invitation to taking part to the ceremonial smoking of the peace pipe. In that moment, they were fully aware of the sacredness of this gesture, because Anadabijou himself had explained to them what it meant. For Girard et Brisson, "by explaining the way in which the Indigenous chiefs had received a pipe directly from the hands of a superior being, Anadabijou showed that the alliance between them and their new French ally carried value for Indigenous peoples."[458] According to d'Avignon and Girard, the treaty was renewed many times over the course of the following decades, always through the use of Innu diplomatic protocols.[459]

For Williams, the smoking of the peace pipe is a sacred ritual that "habituated the tribal individual to envision the relational potentiality of all people and all creation in the universe."[460] He further explains, "[w]hen smoked in the context of treaty negotiations, the pipe evoked a vision of a universally conceived society in which different people were connected to each other as relatives."[461] Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark also provides insight to the offering of the sacred pipe to the French when she describes this gesture from an Anishinaabe perspective. Stark presents the smoking of the pipe as a "treaty practice that recognized both political and spiritual relationship the treaty agreement would create."[462] For her, the spiritual aspect of treaties and their pertaining to creation stories within Anishinaabe law lead to specific responsibilities and obligations for treaty partners. This is something I discuss at greater length below.

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[458] Camil Girard et Carl Brisson, *Nistassinan notre terre*," 45. My translation.
[459] Mathieu d'Avignon et Camil Girard, A-t-on oublié que jadis nous étions « frères »," 6.
[460] Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Linking Arms Together*, 50.
[461] Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Linking Arms* Together, 50.
[462] Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Changing the Treaty Question: Remedying the Right(s) Relationship," in *The Right Relationship: Reimagining the Implementation of Historical Treaties*, eds. John Borrows and Michael Coyle (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 2017): 256.

Regarding the terms of this specific agreement, I turn again to the work of Vincent. I cite Vincent in chapter three for her theoretical analysis of settler's way of relating to Indigenous peoples as "others." Here I draw on her work as an ethnographer with long time connections to Innu communities to provide insight into what of the treaty of Tadoussac means to them. Based on interviews with Innu Elders she has conducted since the seventies in *Pessamit, Uashat Mani-utenam, Ekuanitshit, Nutashkuan, Unaman-shipit,* and *Pakut-shipit*,[463] Vincent highlights points of convergence and difference with Champlain's version of the same events. According to her, there are two types of oral storytelling in Innu culture: *atanukan* and *tipatshimun*.[464] She explains that *atanukan* are stories about the whole of creation and that their purpose is to communicate teachings about the rules of governance in society.[465] By contrast, *Tipatshimun* stories refer to historical events that the Innu have lived and Vincent claims that within Innu oral tradition there is an expectation that this type of storytelling aims at accuracy with regard to those events.[466] The story of *Uepishtikueiau* is one such *tipatshimun* story because it recalls the Innu's first encounters with the French. The Treaty of Tadoussac is at once the agreement at the origins of Québécois society and the moment when the situation of the Innu people began to shift.[467]

According to Vincent, there is discrepancy between what Champlain described as the Europeans' reasons for wanting an alliance and what the Innu recall. According to Champlain, "the French have assured the Innu that his majesty the King of France wishes to help them achieve peace with their Iroquois enemy or send them resources to defeat them."[468] Innu Elders told Vincent that their ancestors understood that the French were asking for a plot of land, for

[463] Sylvie Vincent, "La tradition orale: une autre façon de concevoir le passé," in *Les Autochtones et le Québec: Des premiers contacts au Plan Nord*, eds. Alain Beaulieu, Stéphan Gervais et Martin Papillon (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2013), 76n3.
[464] Sylvie Vincent, "La tradition orale: une autre façon de concevoir le passé," 78.
[465] Sylvie Vincent, "La tradition orale: une autre façon de concevoir le passé," 78.
[466] Sylvie Vincent, "La tradition orale: une autre façon de concevoir le passé," 79.
[467] Sylvie Vincent, "La tradition orale: une autre façon de concevoir le passé," 81.
[468] Sylvie Vincent, "La tradition orale: une autre façon de concevoir le passé," 82-3. My translation.

which they were offering food assistance in exchange. The French were allowed to settle on a small plot in the area where is now Québec City.[469] According to Innu oral tradition, the relations were good at first. The two groups provided each other with food assistance, the Innu taught the French how to live on the land, and the French made efforts to learn their language.[470] However, casting doubt on D'Avignon's claim that the shift to a politics of tolerance and peaceful co-existence lasted until the British conquered the French,[471] Vincent explains that the Innu quickly felt deceived when they realized that new people kept arriving and started acting as if they owned all of the territory. As Vincent argues, "When the French were in sufficient number to be able to organize themselves without help, they stopped paying attention to their relations with the Innu."[472]

Yet, according to Vincent, before the reversal of the balance of power happened, treaty relations described by the Elders were involving gift exchange, something that is at the heart of Indigenous treaty philosophy. This is also argued by Girard and Brisson for whom the Treaty of Tadoussac belongs to the logic of gift exchange as described by Mauss.[473] This interpretation is supported by d'Avignon who claims that "the logic of the gift constitutes a fundamental elements of the alliance."[474] Girard and Brisson argue that "for Indigenous peoples, these alliances are part of a culture of sharing and hospitality,"[475] but that the French's main reason for wanting the alliance was commercial. This was likely the case. However, before commercial relations became the norm it was gift giving as practiced in Indigenous diplomacy that prevailed.[476]

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[469] Sylvie Vincent, "La tradition orale: une autre façon de concevoir le passé," 81.
[470] Sylvie Vincent, "La tradition orale: une autre façon de concevoir le passé," 81.
[471] Mathieu d'Avignon, "L'alliance franco-montagnaise de 1603," 68.
[472] Sylvie Vincent, "La tradition orale: une autre façon de concevoir le passé," 81. My translation.
[473] Camil Girard et Carl Brisson, *Nistassinan notre terre,* 45.
[474] Mathieu d'Avignon, "L'alliance franco-montagnaise de 1603," 75. My translation.
[475] Camil Girard et Carl Brisson, *Nistassinan notre terre,* 12. My translation.
[476] Bernard Assiniwi, *Histoire des Indiens du Haut et du Bas Canada*, Vol. 2 (Ottawa : Les Éditions Leméac, 1974), 32.

Indeed, for d'Avignon, the French who were trying to occupy the territory understood very clearly that the logic of gift exchange represented the most important factor for conducting inter-cultural relations on Indigenous land.[477] Eventually, the practice of bringing gifts to allied Indigenous communities was institutionalized on the French side and applied to their relations with other groups. The gifts offered by the French showed diplomatic deference. Lajoie and Verville argue: "gifts have a capital importance in Indigenous diplomacy, which the French adopted; inseparable from discourse, they serve to maintain alliances and support their purpose."[478] The French lived on Indigenous land as guests[479] and gifts served as a compensation for the hospitality that was shown to them.

According to Lajoie and Verville, "all the vocabulary and the overall protocol used to maintain and renew alliances denoted equality."[480] This equality of the treaty partners included references to family ties, and the French governors were referred to as brothers.[481] Unfortunately, a reversal of the balance of power led to changes in the practice of gift giving and the growing dependency of Indigenous peoples. For example, Innu elders mention to Vincent how settlers breached their trust and soon started acting so as to transform the treaty relationship. They told Vincent that their ancestors often felt betrayed, and that the French did not fulfill their promises, lied, and acted like thieves.[482] As a result of the French's growing greed for fur and land, the gift system became corrupted into a commercial one.[483] The material and economic dependency of Indigenous populations grew, and the French governor started being referred to as a "father" and

[477] Mathieu d'Avignon, "L'alliance franco-montagnaise de 1603," 75.
[478] Andrée Lajoie and Pierre Verville, "Les traités d'alliance entre les Français et les Premières Nations sous le régime français," 178. My translation.
[479] Andrée Lajoie and Pierre Verville, "Les traités d'alliance entre les Français et les Premières Nations sous le régime français," 176.
[480] Andrée Lajoie and Pierre Verville, "Les traités d'alliance entre les Français et les Premières Nations sous le régime français," 177. My translation.
[481] Mathieu d'Avignon and Camil Girard, eds., *A-t-on oublié que jadis nous étions « frères »*," ?
[482] Sylvie Vincent, "La tradition orale: une autre façon de concevoir le passé," 83.
[483] Bernard Assiniwi, *Histoire des Indiens du Haut et du Bas Canada,* ?

no longer as a brother. This change of name shows that there were expectations on the part of Indigenous peoples that the French would take on the role of provider for a time. This expectation is also consistent with treaty relations as understood from an Indigenous perspective, in which partners are normally committed to supporting after each other in times of need. It is not normal for one treaty partner to become impoverished for the benefit of the other. Even then, however, the reference to fatherhood was never meant to signify that Indigenous peoples were surrendering to French authority. Indeed, Lajoie and Verville insist, there was no equivalent to the authoritative patriarchal figure that existed in Europe in Indigenous cultures, and the fact that Indigenous peoples called the French governor a father was never to be interpreted as undermining their self-determination.[484] What all of this demonstrates is that the establishment of the first settlers in North America was dependent on an inter-cultural alliance with the Innu people and not on an act of conquest or an abdication of sovereignty. To summarize, the unlawful appropriation of the land happened *after* a gift of hospitality was offered and *after* the logic of the gift had been establish as proper protocol for this relationship.

According to Bernard Assiniwi, hospitality is a sacred principle among peoples of the large Algonquian linguistic family, such as Innu, Algonquin, Cree, and Ojibwe.[485] He also insists on the importance of sharing and gifting as a life principle (*principe de vie*) and as a symbol of friendship.[486] He places on an equal footing with the principle of sharing the one of acceptance towards others as they are. According to Assiniwi, the readiness to accept people without judgement and to show hospitality was taken advantage of by Europeans.[487] I argue that Québécois people have a responsibility to address this issue, and that it requires not only

[484] Andrée Lajoie and Pierre Verville, "Les traités d'alliance entre les Français et les Premières Nations sous le régime français," 177.
[485] Bernard Assiniwi, *Histoire des Indiens du Haut et du Bas Canada*, Vol. 2, 46.
[486] Bernard Assiniwi, *Histoire des Indiens du Haut et du Bas Canada*, Vol. 2, 69.
[487] Bernard Assiniwi, *Histoire des Indiens du Haut et du Bas Canada*, Vol. 2, 105.

becoming aware of how dependent our ancestors were on building alliances with Indigenous peoples, but also following through with the obligation of reciprocity that is implied in the gift of hospitality. The attention given here to the political significance of hospitality is not meant to suggest that everything about Indigenous/non-indigenous relations should be interpreted through the lens of gifting. I do not mean to minimize the complexity of the power relations involved by suggesting that a gift of hospitality constitutes the essence of those relations. Rather, I argue that Québécois self-determination should be reconfigured, so to have at its core the logic of gifting and the relational perspective to which it pertains. This is the only way to legitimize our presence here. If Mauss claims that the act of giving is what motivates the emergence of human societies, the Québécois should keep in mind that the obligation of reciprocity is at the foundation of non-indigenous presence in America. Québécois self-determination is dependent on the treaty relations by which the first French settlers were allowed to stay. The next section offers insights on the terms of our stay and what it means to be honourable treaty partners primarily through the work of Indigenous scholars presenting their view on what the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy consists of.

Treaty teachings

Education is a recurring theme in the field of Indigenous studies, and although approached differently by different authors, there seems to be a consensus that it has close ties to conducting work of decolonization. There are as many propositions about how Indigenous politics relate to the issue of pedagogy as there are people working on the topic. One example is found in the importance given to themes of knowledge and education by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in its 2015 *Calls to Action*. In this particular case, pointing to the widespread lack of

knowledge about Indigenous realities amongst the non-Indigenous population of Canada (including Québec), the commissioners recommend that all institutions and actors within them take steps towards remedying to this situation. They recommend learning about the history of Indigenous peoples, their cultures and languages. They also insist on the important of learning about the history of colonialism, the residential school system, and their consequences on Indigenous people's lives today. Throughout the report, the commissioners point to treaties not only as one of the many things the general public should be more educated about, but also as a source of knowledge about what reconciliation should be.[488] As far as I understand the recommendations, the focus on education speaks to a contemporary obligation to learn about the historical and contemporary realities of Indigenous peoples in order to act in the present.

For many Indigenous authors and educators, however, simply integrating Indigenous content in curricula will not suffice, and they call for profoundly decolonizing dominant education models, institutions, and pedagogies, pointing to their role in perpetuating colonial relations of power and privilege. Alternatively, they point to Indigenous knowledge and teachings as offering a unique contribution towards disrupting the hierarchical, totalizing, and objectifying tendencies of Western academia. This of course applies to the study of self-determination. For example, Kuokkanen, whose perspective on gifting is discussed in the previous chapter, argues for academia to embrace the logic of the gift as a way of becoming responsible and practicing reciprocity towards Indigenous knowledge and worldviews. Kuokkanen points to academia's "epistemic ignorance," which is "manifested by exclusion and effacement of Indigenous issues and materials in curricula, by denial of Indigenous contributions and influences and the lack of interest and understanding of Indigenous epistemes or issues in

[488] Commission de vérité et réconciliation du Canada, *Appels à l'action*, 2012.

general by students, faculty, and staff alike."[489] She argues for Indigenous epistemes to be "recognized as a gift to the academy"[490] and that this is done by enacting hospitality towards Indigenous knowledge and worldviews. According to Kuokkanen, this implies "a welcome to the other without conditions" and "openness to receive the gift that the guest may bear."[491] Kuokkanen's perspective on the relationship between Western academia and Indigenous epistemes through the logic of the gift speaks to the role of education and pedagogy for decolonization. What matters for Kuokkanen is not the addition of Indigenous knowledge into teaching or the "accommodation" of the cultural difference of Indigenous students, but cultivating an approach to learning and teaching that recognizes the non-universal nature of dominant systems of thought and is hospitable and responsible towards epistemes that are different. She explains for example how Indigenous understandings of the self are never as separate and independent from the natural environment as what is implied by modern Western political thought. Involved in Kuokkanen's argument is the idea that "the academy is challenged to re-examine its role as a host (or, considering the colonial history, the guest-master). It no longer can assume the role of the sovereign host."[492] It also involves "humility on the academy's part; a need and also willingness to reciprocate with other epistemes while remaining aware of disparate relations of power, resources, and privilege."[493] On this last point in particular, Kuokkanen's perspective resonates with the one presented in this dissertation on settler vulnerability and self-determination. Indeed, Kuokkanen's argument for the decolonization of academia applies to the decolonization of settlers' way beyond the issue of education, and I

[489] Rauna Kuokkanen, "What Is Hospitality in the Academy?, Epistemic Ignorance and the (Im)Possible Gift, " *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 30 (2008), 64.
[490] Rauna Kuokkanen, "What Is Hospitality in the Academy?, " 65.
[491] Rauna Kuokkanen, "What Is Hospitality in the Academy?, " 73.
[492] Rauna Kuokkanen, "What Is Hospitality in the Academy?, " 76.
[493] Rauna Kuokkanen, "What Is Hospitality in the Academy?, " 77.

argue that one of the first step settlers need to take in order to reciprocate the gift of hospitality is by showing hospitality in return to the logic of the gift and the teaching it bears.

Thus, in this chapter I approach the notion of pedagogy from the perspective of a historical responsibility settlers *have always had* to learn from treaties. The basic idea is that by becoming treaty partners, European settlers consented to respect Indigenous ways of life and their relationship with the land. Couched into language specific to the logic of the gift, becoming treaty partners signifies accepting the gift of hospitality offered by the local communities and consenting to being a part of the system of reciprocity and responsibility by which the gift of hospitality is continuously renewed. This has implications for intercultural relations and for the self-determination of settlers. Learning about Indigenous treaty philosophy today is a way to redress our failure to learn about it from the very moment the opportunity was offered to us. There is no doubt that learning about treaties today could have a transformative effect on the relationship between Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Québec. That being said, the responsibility to learn does not result in itself from colonial injustice, even if it is a necessary step in the process of decolonization. As I understand it, the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy provides insights on how to manage the co-existence of peoples that are self-determined and different. It seems to me that this obligation is independent from the subsequent colonial violation of the terms of the treaties.

Based on *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, it can be argued that one of the original purposes of treaties and alliances of peace and friendship was to convey teachings to the Europeans. Indeed, from their own admission, Cardinal and Hildebrandt gave the Elders they interviewed a lot of authority in shaping the content of the book,[494] and from the outset the participants insist that understanding treaties from an Indigenous perspective requires learning

[494] Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, ix-x.

about the "spiritual foundations underlying the treaty-making process."[495] The book thus begins with a presentation of some key Indigenous spiritual beliefs, presented by the interviewed Elders as very important not only to them as beliefs they hold sacred, but also for understanding treaty relations. Among those spiritual beliefs they mention the idea of having received sacred gifts to be able to live a good life,[496] the importance of maintaining good relations that foster peace and harmony in the world,[497] and their special relationship with the Creator who put them on this land.[498] Throughout the first part of the book, the notion of teachings appears as an important one for understanding the spiritual context on which the process of treaty making depends. Elder Peter Waskahat explains,

> On this land, in the past and even to day we were very careful about what we were given – what we were given through the uses of everything on the land, Creation. We were very careful, we had our own teachings, our own education system – teaching children that way of life was taught [by] the grandparents and extended families; they were taught how to view and respect the land and everything in Creation.[499]

The mention of teachings is not casual; they are considered an integral part of this Indigenous spiritual worldview that the Elders want us to become aware and respectful of. These teachings are transmitted according to formal ancestral protocols and processes, and those "need to be carefully integrated in any ongoing treaty process that seeks to derive an Indian understanding of treaty."[500] Moreover, Cardinal and Hildebrandt state that for the Elders, "the Creator made North America as a place where the spiritual traditions and teachings required that First Nations follow a way of life predicated upon peace and harmony."[501] Like Corbiere and Simpson, they explain that those teachings represent for the elders "the framework upon which

[495] Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, 1.
[496] Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, 10.
[497] Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, 14.
[498] Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, 18-9.
[499] Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, 6.
[500] Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, ?
[501] Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, 5.

they were to create relationships with the arriving Europeans."[502] Referring to the time of contact, Cardinal and Hildebrandt further stress that those traditions and teachings called for creating relationships that were "governed by the laws, values, and principles that First Nations had received from the Creator,"[503] and that these laws and principles in turn "described the relationships and responsibilities they possessed to and for the lands given to them by the Creator."[504] Accordingly, it can be argued that the process of treaty making depends in part on the proper transmission of those teachings and their realization in people's day-to-day lives.

The link between teaching and the logic of the gift in Indigenous episteme is also made clear by John Borrows in his work on the seven Anishinaabe Grandmother teachings (often referred to as the Grandfather teachings).[505] Those seven teachings are love, truth, bravery, humility, wisdom, honesty, and respect. They are the same teachings as the ones discussed in Simpson's work, in which they are presented as the basis of clan life in Anishinaabe culture, as well as "a guide to relations with other Indigenous Nations."[506] According to the story recounted by Borrows, they are called this way because they are gifts offered to a young Anishinaabe woman and her otter friend Nigig by seven grandmothers, representing the four directions, as well as the sky, earth, and fire. Borrows shows that these gifts as teachings about how to live a good life with others and the natural world are at the core of Anishinaabe law. He argues that applying those teachings can help improve the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Government of Canada. While none of these gifts have a fixed or predetermined purpose, Borrows provides numerous examples of how they apply to different contexts where settlers and

[502] Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, 7.
[503] Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, 7.
[504] Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, 7.
[505] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson refers to these teachings as Gradfather teachings, while John Borrows refers to them as Grandmother teachings. Leanne Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa," 32.
[506] Leanne Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa," 30.

Indigenous peoples interact. Here I focus on the two teachings of love and humility to show how settlers can learn about relational self-determination by paying attention to the interaction of the notion of teaching, the logic of the gift, and the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy.

Borrows argues that love was an active legal principle during the early era of treaty making with Europeans and that during that time, love "was frequently invoked, even in the face of sharp disagreements."[507] Love was expressed for example by "elaborate ceremonies of peace and the mutual exchange of food, clothing, kin, and accommodation,"[508] and he points to the treaty of 1645 between the Iroquois, Anishinaabe, and French as evidence of this. According to the recounting of events by historians, an Iroquois Chief named Kiotseaeton took a French and Anishinaabe leader by the arms and declared: "Here is the knot that binds us inseparably. Nothing can part us…Even if lightening were to fall upon us, it could not separate us; for if it cuts off the arm that hold you to us, we will at once seize each other by the other arm."[509] According to Borrows, this moment is an example of how the grandmother teaching of love is enacted through treaty making. Treaty making, he explains, was further supported by the practice of "exchanging children to be raised in one another's village as a sign of their love and trust towards one another."[510] Although Borrows clearly indicates that treaties are meant to bring together different legal and political traditions without any of them assimilating into the other,[511] and while love is not readily recognized by people of European descent as a principle that has relevance for the conduct of politics, there is evidence that the love expressed at that time was not entirely lost on French settlers, who were aware that their ability to settle depended on it.[512]

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[507] John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics: Revitalizing Canadian Constitutionalism*, 30. [forthcoming]
[508] John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics*, 31. [forthcoming]
[509] Francis Jennings, et. al., The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy (Syracuse, 1985) quoted in John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics: Revitalizing Canadian Constitutionalism* [forthcoming], 30.
[510] John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics*, 31. [forthcoming]
[511] John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics*, 30. [forthcoming]
[512] John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics*, 31. [forthcoming]

Moreover, Borrows makes an observation about Indigenous treaties made with British that I think applies to the ones made with French, when he claims "love was most welcome because of the vulnerability felt by each group in their new relationship."[513] Finally, Borrows reminds us of the tension that exists in any relationship involving love and how it can be turned into something harmful. The reminder is particularly important in colonial context where relations of power are so grossly imbalanced. Nevertheless, according to him, "revitalized treaty relationships drawing on earlier frameworks of kin-based love could [lead] each party to better care for the other and respect the other's self-determination."[514] Referring to love in the process of treaty making is one way in which this Anishinaabe Grandmother teaching is alive and shared with others as a gift.

Another of the Anishinaabe Grandmother teachings is humility, which according to Borrows's perspective, relates to hospitality.[515] More precisely, Borrows connects the gift of humility to the issue of human entanglement, reminding his reader of the inherent relational nature of life.[516] Borrows argues: "[t]hough some may claim otherwise, no one lives with perfect integrity. Nobody resides in a truly unitary/indivisible/undivided/untroubled/holistic world. We absorb contradictory, cross-cutting and parallel ideas throughout our lives."[517] Borrows further explains that because it takes into consideration the interdependency of all beings, Indigenous law "[does] not often frame relationships in absolute terms,"[518] and that "this is particularly the case when relating to land."[519] This appears to me as an important thing to keep in mind when interpreting the meaning of the gift of hospitality found in the early treaties and alliances of peace and friendship. By putting into practice the gift of humility one can learn to accept the

[513] John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics*, 31. [forthcoming]
[514] John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics*, 38. [forthcoming]
[515] John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics*, 91. [forthcoming]
[516] John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics*, 92. [forthcoming]
[517] John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics*, 92. [forthcoming]
[518] John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics*, 100. [forthcoming]
[519] John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics*, 100. [forthcoming]

reality of our entanglement and show openness and hospitality to others. With regards to the issue of self-determination, and if I understand Borrows's meaning correctly, the gifts of love and humility call for decentering from the individual self to account for its interdependency.

For Kovach, member of the Saulteaux Pasqua First Nation and Education professor at the University of Saskatchewan, learning and teaching about treaty process and ethos serves to convey broader teachings about Indigenous worldview and philosophy. In her work with future educators (who are for the most part non-indigenous), Kovach seeks to understand how learning about the notion of treaty can contribute to their preparation for providing to their own students an education that does justice to the meaning of treaties in our lives and help foster a just relationship between Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. She presents her work as an exploration of "the spirit and possibility of treaty, as imagined by Indigenous peoples,"[520] particularly with regards to its potential for supporting "transgressive pedagogies."[521] Kovach warns us against bringing treaty to the classroom as simply another topic, claiming that the meaning of treaty philosophy would then be lost. Similarly to Kuokkanen who argues for embracing the logic of the gift in university education, Kovach calls for "*teaching through treaty* with all the respect and understanding with which the treaties have the potential to afford us all."[522] Kovach explains how *she belongs to treaty* as a worldview and system of thought, and as an educator she seeks to practice treaty philosophy in interaction with her students to teach them how to live together in a manner that honours the treaties. As Kovach explains, for people who have been raised in it and live by it, the spirit of treaty permeates through all the different spheres

[520] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies: Re-imagining Indigenous Presence in the Classroom," *Socialist Studies/Études socialistes* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 111.
[521] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies," 111.
[522] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies," 123.

of their lives.[523] Wanting to do more than simply teaching *about* treaty, Kovach argues:

> It is worth insisting on this truth: treaty is not a "thing." It is a word that describes an active relational process that includes seeking continuous counsel and dialogue on matters that have bearing on the parties it involves.[524]

For Kovach, it is this emphasis on an ongoing dialogue among peoples that makes treaty a potentially subversive idea in the context of education.[525] Kovach's approach to treaty also touches on the issue of self-determination, especially through her contextualization of treaty philosophy through notions of identity, relationality, and sacred dialogue.[526] It is probably through her own self-identification as "being treaty"[527] that she makes the connection between treaty and self-determination the most explicit. Kovach states, "for many of us [treaty] is bound in identity."[528] This identity, she insists, like treaty itself, must be understood and lived through the paradigm of relationality. Treaty relationships are here presented not as objects of human invention for the purpose of bringing about certain desired political outcomes (for example, a *specific* identity), but as something through which one lives with others in the world. For Kovach, treaties hold pedagogical value because they serve to put in practice a philosophical perspective "which presupposes human relations that are dialogic and consultative."[529] She further argues: "although affective and holistic such relations are not anti-intellectual."[530] To have been accepted as treaty partners is to have been offered a concrete opportunity to learn how to practice these types of human relations.

As I am writing this chapter and trying to articulate what I think is an important connection between the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy, the offering of teachings, settlers'

[523] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies," ?
[524] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies," 112.
[525] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies," 112.
[526] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies," 111.
[527] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies," 110.
[528] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies," 110.
[529] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies," 113.
[530] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies," 113.

responsibility to receive the teachings as gifts, and how this supports a radically different and relational approach to self-determination, I am reminded by my friend and colleague Kelly Aguirre that it is the land that does the teaching and that this has implications for the relationship between treaty partners. From this perspective, treaty belongs to the broader category of Indigenous governance. According to Kiera Ladner, Indigenous governance "exists as a relationship with the "circle of life" which encompasses all beings within a territory."[531] Based on James sakéj Youngblood Henderson's notion of ecological context, Ladner further explains that Indigenous governance "is about people establishing a relationship with a territory and *learning* from that relationship."[532] Similarly, for Taiaiake Alfred, Indigenous notions of justice are the product of a worldview where all the components of the natural world are in a "universal relationship."[533] Alfred explains: "Native ideas centre on the imperative of respectful, balance coexistence among all human, animal, and spirit beings, together with the earth. Justice is seen as a perpetual process of maintaining that crucial balance and demonstrating true respect for the power and dignity of each part of the circle of interdependency."[534] Additionally, according to the creation story of the Iroquois Confederacy presented by the Native North American Travelling College, "[a]ll the living creatures are your relations, and they all have instructions as to how they must live in this world. The natural life will always be ready to assist the living beings, if they live in harmony with one another. Humans must always look after their relations

[531] Kiera L. Ladner, "Governing Within an Ecological Context: Creating an AlterNative Understanding of Blackfoot Governance," *Studies in Political Economy* 70 (Spring 2003): 125.
[532] Kiera L. Ladner, "Governing Within an Ecological Context," 125. Emphasis mine.
[533] Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto,* 2nd ed. (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2009), 84.
[534] Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness*, 66.

of the natural world.[535] They must also gather teachings from those relations about how to live a just life with others.

For Emmanuel Colomb, one key difference between Indigenous understandings of education and mainstream non-indigenous models is captured by the idea of holism – holism of the person, the community, life, and the world. As Colomb explains, integral to this understanding are the ideas of change, balance, and harmony. One of the main purposes of education according to this vision is to teach responsibility towards maintaining balance and harmony in this world where all things are related and changing. I understand this to be at the core of the Indigenous understanding of reciprocity Colomb explains,

> The holistic vision of learning throughout Indigenous people's lives is a vision that fundamentally includes change. The latter implies movement and balance between the different parts composing the world, but also a personal reflection that each individual has on the whole. The individual who develops a reflection on a holistic vision of learning in the course of their life must account for at once the parts, the connections, movement, search for balance and their own self-reflective capacity based on who they are.[536]

This point is also made clear by Stark through her focus on the connection between creation stories and Anishinaabe law, including treaty law. Stark stresses the need for treaty relations to account not only for the interest of the human parties involved but also for all the relations composing the natural environment. One way to account for them is to learn from them and apply their teachings. According to Stark, in the context of Anishinaabe law, negative consequences can be expected from failing to do so. This knowledge is conveyed by a creation story recounted by Satrk. According to the story, "Anishinaabe at one time were not relating to

[535] Native North American Travelling College, "The Creation Story," *Traditional Teachings* (Cornwall Island, ON: Native North American Traveling College, 1984), 13.
[536] Emmanuel Colomb, *Premières Nations: essai d'une approche holistique en education supérieure: entre comprehension et réussite* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2012), 52. My translation.

aki [the Earth] in a way that accounted for […] pre-existing relationships."[537] As a consequence, the world was thrown out of balance and the Earth was flooded. Stark recounts, "[w]hen the Earth was created anew, the animals stood up for us, they vouched for the Anishinaabe and said they would teach us how to relate to creation. […] The animals created a relationship with Anishinaabe and took responsibility for our actions. We did the same for the newcomers when we negotiated treaties with the United States and the Crown."[538] For Stark, treaties with the Europeans served to bring the latter into these pre-existing relations with creation and into the network of responsibilities and obligations that they imply. By inviting Europeans to smoke the pipe and the ceremony that are part of Anishinaabe treaty protocols are ways of bringing "all of Creation"[539] in the treaty relationship.

The idea of education through the land could not be made clearer than by Simpson in her article *Land as Pedagogy*. In this article, Simpson argues for Indigenous peoples to break away from state education systems and "reclaim land as pedagogy"[540] in order to achieve the "resurgence of Indigenous political cultures, governances, and nation-building."[541] While it is obvious that Simpson's intended audience is Indigenous, her article provides insights about the political significance of relationality in Indigenous self-determination and the active role of the land.

Simpson tells the story of how Kwezens, a young Anishinaabeg girl, learned to make maple syrup through her interactions with and on the land, by observing the squirrel and maple trees and reproducing their actions. Through Simpson's interpretations, this story appears as an

[537] Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Changing the Treaty Question," 268.
[538] Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Changing the Treaty Question," 268.
[539] Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Changing the Treaty Question," 255.
[540] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 3 (2014): 1.
[541] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Land as pedagogy," 1.

example of Anishinaabeg intelligence,[542] embodied through a close, intimate, and caring relationship with all aspects of creation.[543] Kwezens lives in reciprocity with her close family, extended family, community and the land. Mutual respect, trust, and love nourish her learning.[544] As Borrows explains: "when we acknowledge our relations with the world, and our responsibilities to each other, then we will be blessed or find love and compassion. We will be nourished, sustained, and taken care of."[545] Both Borrows and Simpson's work demonstrate that principles of Anishinaabe governance are rooted in an open, non-authoritative, consensual, intimate relationship with the land, as well as close observation of the relations the natural world is made of. The Elders interviewed by Cardinal and Hildebrandt also mention the interconnection of land, family, community, and intercultural relations. They explains: "Principles of peace and sharing governed all individual and kinship relations. As they explain, the central and primary principles of respect for the land then extended to all those on the land, to family, to relatives, and to other peoples. The new world was to be a place for peace and harmony, and the spiritual principles of living with an attitude of respect for the land and all that was connected to it was expanded to human relations."[546]

Unfortunately, Simpson's article also contains a reminder that the vision put forward by the Elders did not materialize, and she cites the Williams Treaty of 1923 as an example of settlers attempting to disconnect Indigenous peoples from the land. Yet, based on Simpson's presentation of the centrality of the land for Indigenous self-determination, it can be argued that a treaty relationship worth the name is one that respects and upholds the process and context of

[542] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Land as pedagogy," 8
[543] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Land as pedagogy," 15.
[544] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Land as pedagogy," 14-5.
[545] John Borrows, "Fragile freedoms: Indigenous love, law and land in Canada's Constitution," quoted in Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Land as pedagogy," 11.
[546] Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, 70.

learning that she describes. Her purpose is not to teach settlers, but I argue that her article can help us become aware of the teachings found in treaties and reflect on our treaty obligations. I argue that one of the most basic obligations that treaties put on settlers is to not interfere with Indigenous peoples' relationship with the land. According to Simpson, "by far the largest attack on Indigenous Knowledge systems right now is land dispossession."[547] As argued in chapter three, self-determination in the form of the nation-state interferes on Indigenous peoples' relationship with the land, and therefore, does not respect the terms of the early treaties. The principle of non-interference regarding the partners' respective ways of life is clearly stated in the literature on treaties. And if a treaty establishes a shared terrain of reciprocal exchange where partners are changed or transformed by the relationship, it should never be at the expense of something as fundamental to one's culture as the relationship Indigenous peoples have with the land. There is no way around it, to pursue self-determination in a form and through means that implies land dispossession for Indigenous peoples is contrary to the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy, which is dependent on and a product of the intimate, reciprocal, and generous relationship with the land described by Simpson.

The same issue can be interpreted from a different angle. Attempting to colonize Indigenous peoples' relationship to the land also goes against settlers' responsibility to become educated in the logic of the gift and to learn how to live in reciprocity with other people(s) and the natural world. To be clear, anything done by settlers to obstruct an Indigenous relationship to the land is a violation of reciprocity in itself, but it also renders less likely the possibility of learning a different approach to self-determination. Treaty making represents a political system and protocol for establishing and maintaining good relations with all parts of nature and should be respected as such. Fortunately, Indigenous peoples have not let settler colonialism interfere

[547] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Land as pedagogy," 21.

completely. For example, Kovach insists that as nation-to-nation relationships the treaties with the Europeans refute the possibility of land cession and that, consequently, "there is an obligation felt on behalf of many First Nations to continue to protect the land and its resources."[548] Wherever settlers witness Indigenous environmental resistance to land exploitation, they should not see an obstacle to economic development and so-called progress. Rather, they should see active efforts to protect something without which the treaties would be meaningless, for as Kovach argues, "Indigenous environmentalism is a contemporary term for longstanding Indigenous stewardship of the land of which treaty represents."[549] Additionally, Rachel Flowers argues: "[w]hen the state interferes in our business, then it is the obligation of settler subjects to oppose the misconduct of their government. Not for our benefit, but because that is what it means to live lawfully in a treaty relationship. In this way, settlers are not obliged to "co-resist" with Indigenous peoples, but rather, to uphold the integrity of a nation-to-nation relationship."[550] To summarize my own perspective on this, an Indigenous relationship to the land is essential to Indigenous self-determination, and although it cannot be reduced to the question of treaty making, it nevertheless plays a crucial role in upholding the conditions of possibility for treaty relations as conceptualized and practiced from an Indigenous perspective, which in turn holds potential for a transformation of settler self-determination.

All things considered, the idea of Indigenous governance originating from a specific type of relationship with the land does not signify that it is *natural* in the strictest sense of the word. Indeed, Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark draw attention to the necessity of being cautious to not unknowingly or unwillingly reproduce typical settler understandings of land and territory when evoking the special attachment Indigenous peoples have for the land.

[548] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies," 122.
[549] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies," 122.
[550] Rachel Flower, "Refusal to Forgive," 37.

They point for example to the risk of essentializing and reifying Indigenous relations to the land as innate or natural, and re-inscribing as a result the nature/culture binary by which the superiority of the state form is asserted throughout modern Western political thought.[551] Presenting Indigenous peoples' relationship to the land as natural, as opposed to cultural, obfuscates their active role in shaping and practicing governance. An Indigenous relationship to the land is no less political, historical, economic, and cultural than sovereignty. Along similar lines, modern sovereignty, although it is often forgotten, is also *a specific type of relationship* to the land. The difference is that Indigenous peoples insist that a relationship to the land should be non-authoritative and acknowledge interdependency. It should also acknowledge the land and all living beings as having agency. On the contrary, the type of relationship to the land on which the state depends and the knowledge that is being produced as a result are meant to be authoritative, hierarchical, universal, and self-referential.

Few authors have made the implications of the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy for settler self-determination more clear than Harold Johnson and Michael Asch. These two authors, like myself with this chapter, have settlers as their primary audience. Both Johnson and Asch are explicit about the fact that the *only* source of legitimacy for settler presence in North America comes from their status as treaty partners.[552] For Johnson, this legitimacy is bound to the responsibility to learn how to live with others on the land, primarily Indigenous communities but not only. Johnson argues: "the treaties that gave your family the right to occupy this territory were also an opportunity for you to learn how to live in this territory."[553] According to Johnson, treaties connect peoples like families, and he presents treaty making as a process of adoption. According to Johnson, the adoption of the "family" of European descent and the gift of

[551] Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Towards a Relational Paradigm," ?
[552] Michael Asch, *On Being Here to Stay,* 92.
[553] Harold Johnson, *Two Families: Treaties and Government* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Limited, 2007), 21.

hospitality that this represents are part of an ecological order by which balance is maintained in the world. Like many other authors cited above, Johnson too argues that intercultural alliances are essential for maintaining harmony between all parts of Creation. In this sense, Johnson argues there is no profound difference for Indigenous peoples between looking after their relations with the land and the ones they have with other peoples. Johnson argues: "We expected that you would behave like relatives and help us in hard times, just as we took the responsibility to help you if you needed it."[554]

Johnson also points to self-determination as/through sovereignty as one reason for the breach of reciprocity and responsibility implied in treaty relations. He warns settlers that claims of sovereignty render their presence here illegitimate. Johnson states "[…] as long as your judges and legislators continue to rely on their assumption of superiority, you have no legitimate right to occupy and use the territory. Not until you accept that we are equal, that we are relatives, can you justify your place in this territory. Superiority has no legitimacy."[555] Like so many Indigenous authors before and after him, Johnson rejects the possibility that Indigenous peoples would have ceded their land through treaties of cession, as this would have been incompatible with their higher responsibility as caretakers of the land.[556] He argues, "[w]e did not give you control over the entire territory, nor did we abdicate our responsibility for the earth under our law, we did not have the right to pass off our duty to your family, to surrender our choice, our authority."[557] Treaty politics as described by Johnson represents an alternative to sovereignty-based self-determination. For him the latter is nothing more than an abstraction for it is the result

[554] Harold Johnson, *Two Families*," 30.
[555] Harold Johnson, *Two Families*," 103.
[556] See for example Leanne Simpson, "Listening to Our Ancestors: Rebuilding Indigenous Nations in the Face of Environmental Destruction," in *Every Grain of Sand: Canadian Perspectives on Ecology and Environment* ed. J.A. Wainwright (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004), 126-8.
[557] Harold Johnson, *Two Families*," 67.

of a theoretical reflection on the origins of society as opposed to the historical reality of different peoples making alliances to enable co-existence. Conceptualizing self-determination through the lens of sovereignty obfuscates the gift of hospitality and reciprocity found in treaty. Johnson wants settlers to know that sovereignty is not inevitable: "*Kiciwamanawak*, you do not need to formulate abstract concept of supremacy for your existence."[558] He further argues: "*Kiciwamanawak*, you no longer need sovereignty doctrine to justify taking what you need from this territory. You have a treaty right to occupy and use this territory. You received that right when my family adopted yours. Sovereignty is an old excuse to deny my family's equality with yours."[559] While Johnson's argument is framed primarily for Canadian audience, Québécois settlers may find in it an invitation to free themselves from the ideal of sovereignty within which their political imagination is contained and which perpetuates colonialism. More than a simple critique of modern Western self-determination in the form of the nation-state, Johnson wants settlers to realize that they have another option and that it is up to them to learn about and embrace it.

This is also the aim pursued by Asch with the writing of *On Being Here to Stay*. Rejecting the view of treaties as documents by which Indigenous peoples would have surrendered their sovereignty and, accordingly, rejecting as well the idea that settlers have rightfully established theirs, Asch argues for the majority population to take action in order to legitimize their presence on the land. According to Asch's perspective, until this happens, the presence of settler is indefensible. For him, the source of this legitimacy to be fulfilled is found in the shared original intent of treaties, as described by Indigenous peoples today. Indeed, according to Asch, the representation of treaty relations by Indigenous peoples is a more accurate

[558] Harold Johnson, *Two Families*," 105.
[559] Harold Johnson, *Two Families*," 89.

description of what must have been agreed upon than any written documents. This is important because, as Asch argues:

> [i]f we take the view that we lied, the treaties become worthless pieces of paper and we are back to square one. But if we take that view that we meant what we said, they become transformative, for through them we became permanent partners sharing the land, not thieves stealing it, people who are here to stay not because we had the power to impose our will be because we forged a permanent, unbreakable partnership with those who were already here when we came.[560]

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, in my understanding, when treaties are conceptualized and practiced from the perspective of the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy, they express hospitality to difference and serve to manage relations in a diverse and ever changing world. From the perspective of self-determination as/through sovereignty and the assumption of integrity that comes with it, there are two predominant ways of dealing with difference: assimilation or exclusion. The ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy suggests an alternative response and allows for getting out of the exclusion/assimilation dilemma within which modern Western political thought has framed self-determination. For Youngblood Henderson the notion of hospitality to difference is not just an image, an ideal, or an abstract principle. It is a practical responsibility. For example, he argues: "Aboriginal languages have no concept of "strangers." "Guests" within their territory are typically assigned to local families or clans for education and responsibilities. Such kinship is a necessary part of Aboriginal peace and good order."[561] In other words, hospitality serves a purpose beyond welcoming stranger; it is a way of integrating people to the territory and sharing teachings necessary to the effect. Thus, the hospitality found in treaty is not just a gift; it is a practical political approach used to manage diversity and self-determination.

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[560] Michael Asch, *On Being Here to Stay*, 99.
[561] James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson, "Ayukpachi: Empowering Aboriginal Thought," in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voices and Vision*, ed. Marie Battiste (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 270.

Robert A Williams Jr. presents a similar argument in his famous book *Linking Arms Together,* the aim of which is to "tell a history of the legal ideas that American Indian peoples sought to apply in their relation with the West during the North American Encounter era."[562] Williams uses the notion of multicultural frontier to describe the social, cultural, and political context that prevailed at the time of contact between Indigenous peoples and the Europeans. More specifically, Williams portrays early-contact North America as an "unstable and conflict-ridden multicultural frontier"[563] to which Indigenous peoples' vision of peace appeared as the sole viable response. He then goes on to explain all the nuances of treaties as sacred texts, connections, stories, and constitutions.[564] The arrival of the different European nations that came to colonize North America put immense pressure on the diplomatic balance that was previously in place, but Williams presents Indigenous peoples as active facilitators, who managed to perpetuate traditional Indigenous diplomacy as a strategy for dealing with the challenges.[565] The most important factor in this process was the establishment of treaties.[566] Williams argues that in the face of change and at a time when increased diversity often lead to conflict, Indigenous peoples sought to uphold their political tradition aimed at establishing balance, peace and order among peoples.[567] More specifically, he argues that at the time of contact, Indigenous peoples from the North-East portion of North America (including the St-Lawrence valley) valued treaties as a diplomatic approach because they formalise connections between peoples. Treaties, supported by oral tradition, generate stories of peace-making that foster relations of trust and shared law. According to Williams, "[t]he parties to a treaty had to agree to create and sustain a

[562] Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Linking Arms Together*, 3.
[563] Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Linking Arms Together*, 50.
[564] Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Linking Arms Together*.
[565] Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Linking Arms Together*, 20.
[566] Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Linking Arms Together*, 20.
[567] Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Linking Arms Together*, 5.

nomos, a normative universe of shared meanings."[568] Williams explains that because a treaty relationship is subject to changes of circumstances, it was tradition for the treaty partners to meet periodically to renew their commitment to always support one another and make certain that they were equally benefiting from the relationship.[569] More than two decades ago, Williams argued that valuable legal and political lessons on how to facilitate the peaceful co-existence of different peoples could be learned from looking at the politics deployed by Indigenous peoples at the time when this reality was the most challenging for them. His insight remains current to this day although there is a lot to be done for the value of Indigenous perspective on treaties to be fully recognized.

Finally, treaties are also based on the principle of non-interference, as each of the partners maintain their independence in interdependence. Indeed, the collapsing of differences into unity and assimilation are contrary to the ethos of Indigenous philosophy. I understand this to mean that the agent of relational self-determination as it is enabled by treaty is not unilaterally determined by the treaty relationship. Rather, as James Tully explains, the treaty relationship is guided by principles of mutual recognition, intercultural dialogue, mutual respect, sharing, mutual responsibility. Here I focus on his perspective on intercultural dialogue for it emphasizes how important it is to the treaty relationship that they each maintain their independence and their uniqueness. Tully argues that treaties open up a "space where [the partners'] cultures overlap, a middle ground."[570] This is a space where intercultural dialogue takes place. Far from guarantying perfect agreement between the partners, the treaty relationship shows a shared commitment to maintain respectful and culturally sensitive communication and try to resolve all matters to their mutual benefit. Tully explains, "[e]ach speak their own languages and customary ways, on equal

[568] Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Linking Arms Together*, 47.
[569] Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Linking Arms Together*, 103.
[570] James Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key*, vol. 1, 239.

footing, in order to reach fair agreements."[571] For Tully the ability to come to this middle ground and take part to intercultural dialogue is a matter of self-identification, which he connects to one's ability to listen to others. He argues, "the principle of self-identification, of listening to the voices of others in their own terms and tradition, is now widely recognized as the first step in a just dialogue."[572] Self-identification is here defined as a process that is other-oriented. Partners also acknowledge that their respective life extends beyond this middle ground. Ideally, when they meet on this middle ground, treaty partners are neither focussed on themselves nor on the other, but on the relationship they share. Of course, Tully reminds us, there is no "ideal speech situation" outside of colonialism, nor is there a universal language that would transcend our cultural differences.

The idea that treaty partners maintain their independence in interdependence seems like an antinomy, but from what I understand learning to live with this apparent contradiction is one of the teachings found in the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy. Aaron Mills focuses on this specific issue as something that is fundamental to treaties. For Mills, treaties are constitutional associations that "coordinate the relationship of distinct political communities, constituting a shared political community across them."[573] Although Mills insists that treaties are meant to uphold the distinctiveness and uniqueness of treaty partners, he rejects the language of autonomy. Mills argues: "So tightly are we bound that although we are distinct, unique peoples, we are not and have never been autonomous peoples: as interdependent persons and communities within creation, we're always already in relationship."[574] For Mills, treaty interpretation should

[571] James Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key*, vol. 1, 240.
[572] James Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key*, vol. 1, 240.
[573] Aaron Mills, "What Is a Treaty? On Contract and Mutual Aid," in *The Right Relationship: Reimagining the Implementation of Historical Treaties*, ed. John Borrows and Michael Coyle (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 2017), 208.
[574] Aaron Mills, "What Is a Treaty? On Contract and Mutual Aid," 210.

therefore be guided by principles of reciprocity and citizenship, where the latter is understood as citizenship to the treaty community. Mills insists that difference is an important factor to the notion of interdependency. He presents this as a condition of possibility for freedom, itself dependent on the circulation of gifts. Mills argues: "Within creation, each being serves as a condition of the freedom of all others. Each of us needs the gifts we don't have in order to be free and, in many instances, to simply survive. As deeply incomplete beings, the ubiquitous need for the gifts we lack means that each of us is inherently connected to all others – and not just human others."[575]

Mills explicitly rejects the possibility of treaties being the object of legal interpretation. In this sense, Mills draws a sharp contrast between the understanding of treaty he is putting forward and contractualism as a framework for treaty interpretation. The latter is useless for navigating the apparent tension when independence and interdependence are thought together and when ongoing change is seen as an essential feature of community life. Mills rightly points to contractualism as the "breeding ground for certainty and perpetuity – for permanence, – in which change, the pulse of life, has been negotiated out."[576] As I argue in chapter two, the quest for certainty and security is at the heart of the modern Western notion of sovereignty, which is also the drive behind the contractual interpretation of treaty. Critiquing this framework from the perspective of his own community, Mills explains that in Anishinaabe constitutionalism "the absence of certainty isn't a structural failing in dire need of justification, but rather the only coherent position."[577] The absence of certainty is a defining feature of relationality. Finally, Mills touches on the idea of an ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy when he points to the importance of harmony in Anishinaabe constitutionalism. Mills argues: "Having no concept of autonomy to

[575] Aaron Mills, "What Is a Treaty? On Contract and Mutual Aid," 231.
[576] Aaron Mills, "What Is a Treaty? On Contract and Mutual Aid," 217.
[577] Aaron Mills, "What Is a Treaty? On Contract and Mutual Aid," 235.

be violated and thus no rights to be vindicated, the goal towards which Anishinaabe constitutional order strives isn't justice, it's harmony. Importantly however, this isn't harmony in the romantic sense of non-conflict. This is harmony understood as the ceaselessly changing but grounded state of interdependent selves engaged with each other in personal practices of mutual aid, which we may call living in right relation."[578]

Conclusion

According to the authors cited in this chapter, when treaty relations are animated by the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy, they support a relational understanding of self-determination, as well as a diverse conception of the world where different people live in interdependency, seeking balance and harmony. As far as I understand, there are two possible and related understandings to how the principles of balance and harmony operate in the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy. Firstly, seeking balance and harmony is a responsibility in the sense that people need to see difference not as something that drives them apart, but as something that brings them together in relations of cooperation. Secondly, balance and harmony must also be found between the two seemingly opposed principles of independence and interdependence. These two points may very well count as one and the same to the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy. I am not sure. In any case, I see here two important lessons for people who have been educated within a culture that values sovereignty as the highest mark of self-determination, like Québécois settlers. The ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy, as it is presented in the work of the different authors referenced in this chapter, does not posit the interdependency of all beings as an obstacle to freedom, but as its condition of possibility. This implies that interdependency is mediated by reciprocity. Conceptions of self-determination that are aimed at the individualization of an

[578] Aaron Mills, "What Is a Treaty? On Contract and Mutual Aid," 236.

atomistic sovereign subject seem contrary to the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy.

I suggest that the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy also leads to a different perspective on vulnerability. If relationality implies the possibility of vulnerability, *relations in the form of treaties* allows for alleviating this possibility. As described by the authors cited, when conceptualized from an Indigenous perspective, treaties are grounded in the partners' commitment to look after each other's respective and mutual interest and are meant to adapt to changing circumstances and imply respect for difference. My point is that to be a treaty partner allows for a different relationship to others and the world, but also to one's own vulnerability. Treaties aim to create mutual relationships based on trust and respect[579] and, as Asch has thought me over the years, relationality when it is mediated by reciprocity and responsibility does not lead to the same sentiment of vulnerability as the one that is felt in the pursuit of self-determination as/through sovereignty. Consequently, the alliances and treaties of peace and friendship between the French and Indigenous peoples should have prevented the development of a situation of imbalanced dependency and should have lead instead to the fair ongoing balancing of interdependency.

Approaching the topic of this chapter through a focus on learning and teaching shows that settlers have always had a responsibility to learn about reciprocity and responsibility. Indeed, as the chapter demonstrates, these notions are integral to treaty relations. Settlers' responsibility to learn about the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy is not just a remedy against colonial injustice; it was a responsibility from the start and an opportunity to reflect on our own understanding of self-determination. There is a limit to how settlers can expect Indigenous peoples to willingly teach them about how to restore balance and harmony in the world. Québécois settlers must come to learn these things not necessarily by themselves in the sense of

[579] Michael Asch, "Levi-Strauss and the Political," 436.

doing it in isolation, but led by their own responsibility. I argue that it starts be reflecting and transforming our understanding of who we are as a society by acknowledging that it was only ever possible thanks to the gift of hospitality received through treaty.

Conclusion

From the perspective of this dissertation, in order for a transformation of the relationship between Indigenous and Québécois self-determination to occur, Québécois settlers need to let go of their desire to form an *in*vulnerable sovereign political subject. There is a strong link between sovereignty-based self-determination in the form of the nation-state and colonialism, and our attempts to always further consolidate our position as a sovereign self-determined subject are incompatible and even detrimental to treaty relationships. More precisely, on the basis of what Indigenous scholars have been arguing about the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy, my understanding is that the ideals of individuality, autonomy, integrity, closure, and self-boundedness that are implied in self-determination *as/through* sovereignty are contrary to the principles of reciprocity and responsibility through which we should approach our role of treaty partner. Yet, as a result of the Quiet Revolution, these ideals have crystalized into an alliance between three things: a national cultural identity grounded in the experience of being a French minority, the development and control of modern state institutions, and conceiving the land as a legally enclosed territorial unit within which the Québécois form a majority. As a majority, the Québécois *identify* with the nation-state of Québec and see the borders of the province as the limits of who they are as a sovereign political entity.

As I argue in the dissertation, Québécois self-determination is hardly an anomaly, and an autonomous majority nation in control of a state continues to represent the highest mark of self-determination and standard of political maturity. This perspective relies on subjugating relationality to the imperative of individuality. From a relational perspective, however, the self-determined political community is never as atomistic, individualized, autonomous, self-bounded, and integral as the sovereign political subject that is at the core of the hegemonic modern

conception of self-determination. Self-determination as/through sovereignty is at once a symbolic and a practical enterprise. The self seeks knowledge of itself, but also actual control over the material conditions necessary to supporting its existence. Therefore, invulnerability is measured in terms of certainty and security. The problem is that neither can be achieved in any sort of permanent way. Thus, I claim that, since Hobbes, sovereignty-based self-determination in the nation-state form is a project that relies on vainglory and that sovereignty is nothing more than the illusion of having overcome vulnerability. This is because even in the most sophisticated attempt to deny it – as in self-determination as/through sovereignty – self-determination always remains a relational process. As the Québécois aim to resist the logic by which they are deemed a minority, the nation-state form renders Indigenous self-determination even more vulnerable. The sovereign Québécois subject thus effectively reproduces on others the problem it fails to resolve for itself.

I interpret sovereignty-based self-determination as a response to the sentiment of vulnerability that is felt by many Québécois as a minority. This sentiment is a recurring theme in the nationalist literature, to the point that it can be argued that there is the presence of a discourse of vulnerability in Québec. To support this claim, I provide examples of authors whose works spread across most of the 20th Century and into the opening decade of the 21st. Their perspectives on the causes of Québécois vulnerability vary, but most of them agree on the significance of the experience of forming a linguistic minority inside the broader North American context, as well as the long history of having to fight to be recognized and respected as self-determined. These authors contribute to spreading the idea that the Québécois form a vulnerable minority whose salvation is in forming an *in*vulnerable majority is never fully achieved.

In this dissertation, self-determination is understood as taking place in the tension where aspirations to independence and the inescapable need to live in relations are not irreconcilably opposed, but intersect productively. More precisely, I define relational self-determination as being made of the interaction of four interdependent phenomena: identification, self-awareness, belonging, and meaning construction. As a process of identification, relational self-termination does not proceed from a pre-existing identity in need of affirmation or recognition, but from constructing a sense of self over time by interacting with others and the world. Relational self-determination is also a process that is subject to change, and as a result, self-awareness is not something that can be held fixed but the outcome of ongoing transformation. As for belonging, it is not here conceptualized as a self-referential and internal process, where people who recognize their likeness in each other associate together. To stress this point further, belonging is not grounded in identity. Belonging is rather an active reciprocal process that involves care and a relationship to difference. Finally, meaning construction in relational self-determination is not the prerogative of a sovereign subject as it is for Hobbes, but a process that involves ongoing discovery of the self as much as of others and the world. Most importantly, all of these phenomena imply difference, not as something that exists outside the self or as diversity within, but as a process in which all humans and communities are involved.

At the outset of this dissertation, I present a framework for thinking through the issue of vulnerability in connection to human relationality. I recall briefly the five ways in which one can be said to be vulnerable. The first implication to our relational condition comes from the possibility of losing our attachment to others. The second one has to do with the risk of being hurt that comes with being in relations. The third implication resides in the danger of finding ourselves in relations with others who seek our partial or total assimilation for the sake of their

own invulnerability. The fourth way in which humans can be said to be vulnerable refers to the ever-present part of unpredictability, which reminds us that self-determination is never total. Finally, the fifth implication could be expressed as follows: we are the way we relate to others and the living world around us. In other words, we are the way we relate to what is different. Self-determination certainly involves an aspect of intentionality in the sense that it is carried out of a desire to live independently, but intentionality is not all there is to self-determination. More important is the way we treat others and ourselves within the context of our relations. To conclude this dissertation, I draw attention to the last two points.

The idea that self-determination always remains to a certain extent unpredictable because it resists closure, and the notion that, more than will, it is the nature of the relationships we entertain with others and the world that make us who we are have the potential to open up new ways of thinking about self-determination. Both of these ideas, even if they imply the *possibility* of vulnerability, also carry within themselves an approach to self-determination that, ultimately, has the potential to make us feel less vulnerable, without having to resort to closure. In other words, not everything that can make humans vulnerable is negative. In order for this to be true, we must learn to see interdependency and difference as the fabric of self-determination. The last two chapters are articulated around this different approach, one from the perspective of the Maussian theory of gifting and the other from the perspective of the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy.

Mauss approaches the issue of self-determination through the question of the origins of society, taking the need to relate to alterity as the most basic reality of politics and as something that cannot be escaped. For Mauss, human society is made of interdependent groups that are constantly in the process of negotiating their mutual interdependency and co-existence by giving,

receiving, and giving in return. In other words, the world is for him made of endless webs of relations outside of which society simply could not exist. From this perspective, self-determination depends on sharing and continuously opening up to relations outside of the self. For Mauss, gifting serves to establish a balance between agency and interdependency, and if the self in particular instances always has a choice between giving and refusing to do so, in absolute, it can never deny its relational condition. Humans need to take part to the circulation of gifts because they need to be connected to others in order to live. His theory of self-determination is thus a theory of reciprocity and to take part to gifting is to be engaged in the endless movements of reciprocity. Ultimately, it makes us less vulnerable to the negative implications of relationality because interdependency and difference are no longer seen as problems. Gifting enables the co-existence of culturally diverse peoples by allowing them to manage their interdependency without assimilating into one another.

The Maussian perspective is purposely theoretical, and it may be difficult to see how this applies in specific contexts, but I argue that Québécois self-determination must be understood from within the perspective of gifting as presented by Mauss. I point to the fundamental significance of the gift of hospitality received from Indigenous peoples, who agreed to form treaty relations with the French, particularly in Tadoussac in 1603. The French knew that they needed to be accepted by the local Indigenous populations in order to be able to stay. When our ancestors were invited and agreed to smoke the sacred pipe in that moment, they engaged their and our responsibility towards the circle of reciprocity that sustains life on this land. In other words, they agreed to living in peace, respect, and harmony with First Nations and the land. And if they did not know what that meant in the moment, it can be argued that they at least agreed to

learn. No less today than at the time of this agreement, the legitimacy of Québec self-determination depends on reciprocating the gift and acting as honourable treaty partners.

The dissertation ends with an argument on the need to learn from the growing body of literature on treaty about our responsibility as treaty partners, how we can reciprocate the gift of hospitality, and relational self-determination more generally. The works of the Indigenous scholars cited in chapter five suggest that, when they are sustained by the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy, treaties rest on a conception of the self that is deeply relational. Accordingly, I invite us, the Québécois settlers, to reflect on the origins of our society in treaty and hospitality and to take the full measure of our original dependency on Indigenous peoples. I invite us to think about this relationship through the logic of the gift. If Mauss claims that the act of giving is what motivates the emergence of human societies, the Québécois should keep in mind that reciprocity is at the foundation of the French presence in America. I invite us to embrace the vulnerability involved in accepting that the legitimacy of Québécois self-determination depends on the renewal of treaty relations and the interdependency that comes with it. As I understand the ethos of Indigenous treaty philosophy, when they are conceptualized and practiced from within this perspective, treaties allow for the realization of both independency and interdependency, whereas sovereignty calls for emancipation from interdependency to achive autonomy. Based on the words of the Elders cited in *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, as well as the work of Borrows, Simpson, Johnson, and Stark, among others, I argue that settlers have always have a responsibility to learn from treaties, and that one of the purposes of treaty relations in that context is to convey teachings about how to live in respect, balance, and harmony with all living beings and with the land. Finally, it is from within this context and by learning from this new perspective, that I invite us to rethink what it means to be free.

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