

**THE PROBLEM OF AGENCY IN  
THE POLITICS OF VICTIMHOOD:  
NIETZSCHE, ARENDT, AND FOUCAULT**

by  
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**THE PROBLEM OF AGENCY IN THE POLITICS OF VICTIMHOOD:  
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## ABSTRACT

### THE PROBLEM OF AGENCY IN THE POLITICS OF VICTIMHOOD: NIETZSCHE, ARENDT, AND FOUCAULT

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Victimhood as socio-political construction of a collective identity and as a rising phenomenon in politics especially in democracies has been problematized by many scholars in regard to the problem of agency. Although the politics of victimhood corresponds to a search for political recognition and correspondingly signifies political agency, the specific kind of relationships it produces carry the risk to result in undercut of agency. There are a number of researches on the functions and consequences of the politics of victimhood, however there is a gap in the literature in terms of examining it in Political Theory at length. In this thesis, the problem of agency in the politics of victimhood is examined under the theoretical framework of Nietzsche, Arendt, and Foucault in order both to investigate the relevancy of the problematizations about the functions and consequences of the politics of victimhood as dangers of undermining agency and to generate new approaches to overcome victimhood and the problem of agency. The analyses present creative values and political action along with different understandings of power, identity, and freedom as to enhance agency and to overcome victimhood.

## ÖZET

### MAĞDURİYET SİYASETİNDE FAIL SORUNU: NİETZSCHE, ARENDT VE FOUCAULT

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Anahtar Kelimeler: mağduriyet, faillik, kimlik, iktidar, siyasal eylem

Sosyo-politik bir kolektif kimlik inşası olarak ve siyasette, özellikle demokrasilerde giderek yükselen bir fenomen olarak mağduriyet, fail sorunu bakımından pek çok bilim insanı tarafından sorunsallaştırılmıştır. Mağduriyet siyaseti her ne kadar politik olarak tanınma arayışına tekabül etse ve buna bağlı olarak faillik belirtse de, mağduriyet siyasetinin ürettiği belli ilişki türleri failliği zayıflatma riskini taşımaktadır. Mağduriyet siyasetinin işlevleri ve sonuçları üzerine birtakım araştırmalar bulunmaktadır, fakat literatürde konuyu Politik Teori bağlamında detaylı olarak incelemek anlamında bir boşluk bulunmaktadır. Bu tezde, mağduriyet siyasetindeki fail sorunu Nietzsche, Arendt ve Foucault'un kuramsal çerçevesi altında hem mağduriyet siyasetinin faillğe zarar verebilecek işlevleri ve sonuçlarına dair sorunsallaştırmaların geçerliliği araştırılmakta hem de faillik sorunu ile mağduriyetin aşılması adına yeni yollar geliştirilmektedir. Analizler, iktidar/güç, kimlik ve özgürlük gibi kavramların farklı kavranışı ile birlikte yaratıcı değerler ve siyasal eylemi failliği güçlendirecek ve mağduriyeti aşmayı sağlayacak şeyler olarak sunmaktadır.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
2.	PROBLEMATIZATIONS OF THE POLITICS OF VICTIMHOOD .....	11
2.1.	Convergence of Victimhood with Identity .....	12
2.2.	Competitive Victimhood .....	15
2.3.	Victimhood in Conservative Discourses.....	18
2.4.	Victimhood in Conflict Societies.....	24
2.5.	The Rise of Victimhood Culture.....	26
2.	FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE: MASTER AND SLAVE MORALITIES, WILL TO POWER, AND REVALUATION .....	29
2.1.	Nietzsche’s Philosophical Framework.....	30
2.1.1.	Pathos of Distance .....	33
2.1.2.	Will to Power .....	35
2.1.3.	Free Spirits.....	38
2.2.	The Politics of Victimhood in the Light of Nietzsche’s Theoretical Framework .....	43
3.	HANNAH ARENDT: POLITICAL ACTION, SPEECH, AND IDENTITY.....	52
3.1.	Arendt’s Theoretical Framework.....	55
3.1.1.	Vita Activa.....	55
3.1.2.	The Loss of the World .....	60
3.1.3.	Political Power.....	63
3.1.4.	Vita Contemplativa.....	66
3.1.5.	Promise and Forgiving.....	70
3.2.	The Politics of Victimhood in the Light of the Arendt’s Theoretical Framework.....	73
4.	MICHEL FOUCAULT: POWER, SUBJECTION, AND RESISTANCE.....	83
4.1.	Foucault’s Theoretical Framework.....	85
4.1.1.	Governmentality .....	87
4.1.2.	Technologies of Power; Discipline and Panopticism .....	90
4.1.3.	Normalization .....	94
4.1.4.	Polemics and Problematization.....	97

4.1.5. The Question of Freedom and Resistance .....	99
4.2. Reading the Politics of Victimhood in the Light of Foucault's Theoretical Framework .....	105
5. CONCLUSION.....	114
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	128

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Victimhood has been having a particular weight in politics since it is used to refer to the experiences of those who have suffered from a harm done by another, others, or an institution. There has been a surge of victim-oriented politics for the last decades. (Cole 2007) Even though the content and context of the issued victimhood differ, it has become a widely spread discourse. Although the discourse of victimhood is seen to belong to the left historically, it has also been notably employed by conservatives. Victimhood has become more common in democracies while victimization is more frequent in repressive states. (Jacoby 2015) It has become part of the rising identity politics and the paradigm of representative democracy enabled and encouraged political actors to elaborate on the issues of victimhood. Based on its collective aspect and social construction of identity, it has converged with identity politics. (Furedi 2017) It is even considered as a recently rising culture. (Campbell and Manning 2018) In a sense, the politics of victimhood has also started to correspond to political correctness, so that it is a question on the political truth. Hence, today, victimhood is a part of everyday politics and operates specific kinds of relationships. For this reason, many scholars have raised the problem of group agency in the politics of victimhood. Claiming that the politics of victimhood is passive or apolitical or showing no agency is irrelevant due to mobilization and seeking for political recognition as clear signs of agency. Thus, with no doubt, there is agency. However, it is important to specify the practices that carry the risk and danger of undercutting or weakening agency of the actors, while the politics of victimhood has been becoming a hegemonic social principle. Thus, this thesis is not about the dangers of victimhood, but the dangers that may occur in the politics of victimhood. There is a gap in the political theory literature to grasp this subject. In this thesis, by referring to the problematizations about the politics of victimhood in a comprehensive way, I aim to make an analysis of this subject within the theoretical and philosophical framework of Friedrich Nietzsche, Hannah Arendt, and Michel Foucault in order not only to generate critical analyses but

also to search for the possibilities to overcome both the problem of agency and victimhood. In this thesis, I deal with victimhood at group level as an organizing theme that is not only a socio-political construction of identity but also a hegemonic principle that effects social and political relations and possibilities. The motivation behind this thesis is not to trivialize the claims on victimhood and demands related to it, to the contrary, it is to present new perspectives to strengthen such claims and demands because historically such claims and demands constituted today what we call human rights.

Victimhood can be described as a mindset that one perceives oneself as victim along with some feelings, beliefs, and behaviors related to this perception. The recognition of someone or a group can be done within three aspects: self-definition, legal definition, and socio-cultural factors. (Druliolle and Brett 2018, 13) The sense of victimhood can be grasped both at individual and group/collective level. At the individual level, it is also described as a psychological state in which one perceives himself as victim and feels like one. (Bayley 1991) One can experience either direct or indirect harm done by another that caused suffering. (Viano 1989) Here, harm can be both tangible and intangible. Although the cause can be observable, it is also a subjective process that one perceives his own victimhood. (Garkawe 2004) The cause of suffering and the lasting consequences may become elements in the personality of the victim. (Herman 1992) There are a number of elements that constitutes' one's sense of victimhood, such as; being harmed by an individual or individuals or institutions, not being responsible of the harmful event, inability to prevent the harm, being morally right since it was an unjust act on the victim, and the necessary sympathy toward the victim. (Sykes 1992) So, this perception is accompanied with moral judgements and beliefs as well as the remark on the violation of individual or collective rights. (Bar-Tal et al. 2009) Consequently, the individuals who perceive themselves as victims seek for a social validation and an external validation that will officially validate their claim and their state. (Viano 1989) Aside from the fact that individuals who suffered from a cause done by another consider that cause as an unjust act on them, they also consider it as a violation of a social norm. (Strobl 2004)

Some has argued that the sense of victimhood is not only about self-perception, but also about social construction since the state of 'victim' is shaped and legitimized in a social environment. (Holstein and Miller 1990) This legitimization also leads individuals to become more associated with their victim identity which works as a social label on them.

They become inclined to keep and maintain the victim status. It is important to note that the construction of the victim identity or label may vary across societies since every society has its own cultural motives and socio-political contexts. (Bayley 1991) Furthermore, it is also important to benefit from the constructivist approach in order to understand the senses of collective victimhood and its politics.

At the collective level, the sense of victimhood is shared among a group who also shares a common mindset accompanied with feelings, beliefs, and behaviors attached to it. Similar to the individual perception, the harm may be experienced either directly or indirectly. The sense of belonging to a group who have suffered from a harm and have a collective memory about the past may also be the reason for individuals to consider themselves as victims. The collective sense of victimhood leads to a share of beliefs among the group along with a shared cognitive framework to assess societal manners. This share of beliefs is an element that constructs the social identity of the members of the group as a process of group formation. (Turner et al. 1999) In this sense, the collective sense of victimhood can be the constituent of a social identity. (Bar-Tal et al. 2009) The cause of suffering, its assessment by the individuals exposed to the harm and the reactions, claims, and demands articulated around it become part of a narrative that also help to construct the social identity. (Robben and Suarez-Orozco 2000) The narratives constitute a knowledge that is shared by the group members and it transfers the knowledge to the next generations. As the constructivists argued, the sense of victimhood may well be constructed socially by the transmission of narratives and cultural norms that frame one's self-perception and identity among others.

The *cultural representations of suffering* “can be appropriated in the popular culture or by particular social institutions for political and moral uses.” (Kleinman et al. 1997) They can be learned in social relations. They can also form a culture, a moral code as source of execution of power in social relations. (Campbell and Manning 2018) In this regard, although in some cases victims are recognized as ‘depoliticized’ actors because their relationship with politics is antithetical (as two opposing performative entities) (Jeffrey and Canda 2006); and although it is recognized as a cultural concern, it has also a public aspect. Frank Furedi (1998), in his analysis of British political culture, noted that the public acknowledgement of victimhood and the cause of suffering become a “direct claim to moral authority”. (81) Also, as against the association of the sense of victimhood with

a sense of powerlessness, it has been argued that the collective practices on the basis of collective sense of victimhood, such as mourning, grieving, and memorialization must be emphasized under political agency. (Walklate et al. 2011) Consequently, it is safe to assert that victimhood and its senses, especially collective victimhood, are political; and since its problematization in public may form a power or pose a claim of or a demand for power, it is possible to talk about its politics. What makes victimhood political is its collective experience. (Williams 2008, 80) Thus, victimhood is a political construction. (Ronsbo and Jensen 2014, 1)

*Politics of victimhood* (Jeffrey and Candea 2006) has become a necessary conceptualization since the issues about victimhood cannot be explained or elaborated only in judicial or moral areas. Victimhood was also seen as a ‘depoliticizing machine’, however, since the act of depoliticizing itself is political, as of everything, “victimhood does not negate politics through and through.” (Ferguson 1994; Jeffrey and Candea 2006, 289-290) Druliolle and Brett (2018) while examining the politics of victimhood in post-conflict societies, they refer the politics of victimhood as “how victimhood is defined, negotiated and contested, both socially and politically.” (2018, 2) These definitions ground on the fact that victimhood is a social and political construction. The diversity of the cultural practices regarding victimhood is an evidentiary that those practices are socially constructed and continues to be constructed in public. (Lowney and Holstein 2001) In short, the self-perceived victimhood, at the collective level, is a construction of social and political identity. To some, it is also important to distinguish victimhood and the politics of victimhood. Because although suffering can be issued in politics in order to protest and to eliminate injustice, the powerlessness of the victim may become a kind of power that can be weaponized in politics. (Bickley 2016)

It is also important to differentiate victimization and victimhood and to theorize victimhood in order to question the problem of agency in the politics of victimhood. I remain abide by the theorization of victimhood by Jacoby (2015): The act of harm done on another or a group is called victimization, while the collective identity based on that harm is defined as victimhood. The identity based on victimhood signify a search for recognition. This search itself is a clear sign of agency. There are a number of stages that victims experience until gaining that recognition. In the search for gaining power, victims pursue struggles that are dependent on the structural conduciveness or the political

context; that are presenting a political consciousness (either choosing politics of grievance or politics of resentment); that are accompanied with an ideological concurrence, a defining 'we' by projecting "individual experience onto a broader ideological canvas to draw attention of others and fit into dominant political narratives"; that of a mobilization attempts to affect the power distribution; that aims to gain political recognition. (Jacoby 2015, 522-527) At the last stage, victim groups either overcome the victimhood and integrate to the democratic society or they become trapped while benefiting the victim status. (Jacoby 2015, 528) This theorization reveals the political nature of victimhood which is a collective matter and a socio-politically constructed identity. These stages also unfold the risks in which the possibility for victims to overcome their victimhood may diminish because they depend on (mould themselves in accordance to) broader political structures, cultures, and narratives to process political recognition. "The degree of agency victims claim for themselves depends on their specific relations with broader groups and benefactors." (Jacoby 2015, 525) Here, it is important to underline that the degree of agency may differ to these processes in which the victimhood is constructed. But it is never equal to zero. Yet, it is important to take into account the effects of these processes and the specific relations on the representation of the victimhood of the actors.

It has been discussed whether the concept of 'victim' itself attribute a sense of powerlessness or passivity to the individual who is either defined as or who perceives himself as such. Since the seek for political recognition and mobilization are clear signs of agency, it is not possible to agree on the passivity of the actors, to the contrary, they are neither passive nor apolitical. However, it is important to understand the status of victim is an object as an emic category, which may "negate the possibility of becoming." (Ronsbo and Jensen 2014, 4) Especially, the victims in a politics of resentment may be "passively defined by their victimhood" and "are no longer actors per se" since their suffering becomes "constitutive of self-understanding" and it produces a moral code that condemns the perpetrator as an evil. (Horwitz 2018, 555) In this short, it has been problematized that "victimhood as state may in fact negate agency"; and yet, the fact that they mobilize to claim their rights can be read as "an expression of agency" so that they are neither passive nor apolitical. (Druliolle and Breet 2018, 7) As Jacoby (2015) noted, there can be different degrees of agency in the cases of victimhood also depending on the cultural complexities that vary in terms of ideas, practices, domains and places. (Arfman

et al. 2016, 15) In this regard, it is important to abstain from defining victimhood normatively and from examining it with a reductionist approach that are disregarding its complexities. There are many different types, practices, and representations of victimhood by various groups in politics. In this thesis, by underlining and keeping this fact in mind, I assess the concept of victimhood at the group level (including states, opposition groups, identity groups that centralizes victimhood in their discourses, although they may differ in methods as well) and examine it as a changing social principle; also, while examining the politics of victimhood, I acknowledge the clear signs of agency and I only try to point out the dangers of the politics of victimhood may occur as undercutting agency. Hence, it is important to ponder upon the relevancy of the problematizations in literature about the problem of agency in order to search for the ways in which we can avoid those dangers and risks that may negate agency of victims in politics.

There are a number of functions and consequences of the politics of victimhood that have been pointed out by some scholars with regard to its imperatives of seeking for recognition and incorporation to broader ideological narratives. The self-perception and definition as victim may lead a self-righteousness in moral and ideological sense with reliance on the recognition in a society with the status of victim; consequently, it may easily lead to an indifference about the actions and possible harms done to others by the person who defines himself as victim. (Williams 2008) And “victimhood establishes a space for a specific kind of politics” that is posing “itself as neutral or indisputable starting point from which discussion, debates, and action -in a word, politics- can and must proceed.” (Jeffrey and Candea 2006, 293) A number of researches showed that victimhood can be treated as a political source and mobilization of victims engenders a competition on the basis of ‘who suffered more’ between various groups. (Druliolle and Brett 2018) The ontological primacy of the state of victimhood in politics leaves it open to manipulation and instrumentation; it becomes a matter of competition. Some has also drawn attention to the *competitive victimhood* that may last intergroup conflict and violence and restrain actors from reconciliation due to the fact that the victim status is contested by the conflicting groups so that they strengthen their position. (Staub 2006; Bar-Tal et al. 2009) This creates a kind of infinite loop or vicious circle for those in the state of victim, and it brings out the dilemma of representation. The vicarious claims to victimhood by creating its own “circular logic” may “undercut the very idea of group

agency.” (Williams 2008, 88) As a result, although there is a source of agency, there is the risk that *vicarious claims to victimhood* would actually weaken the agency of the victims as in the cases of Serbia (ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims) and Israel (ongoing subjugation of Palestinians) where the difficulty to share a common narrative that is reasonable and accurate, the difficulty for actors to acknowledge themselves as agents due to group dynamics, the mobilizing power of victimhood displayed for ideological purposes, the failure of taking responsibility and of being accountable can be observed. (Williams 2008, 90)

I regard the debate on the problem of agency in relation to the socio-political construction of the victim identity as remaining contested. The socio-cultural complexities signify the need for investigating the relations between victimhood and identity, and between victimhood and agency. (Arfman et al. 2006) In this sense, although the politics of victimhood cannot be considered as equal to zero-sum game, it is important to elaborate on the problematizations about the politics of victimhood and to present new approaches to examine it on theoretical bases due to the recent salience of it in contemporary politics. I believe, there is a gap in the Political Theory literature that examines the politics of victimhood and the problem of agency related to it at length.

Some scholars argue that although discourse on victimhood carry the risks numbered in the literature, it is historically the only way for people to engage in politics and seek for justice and truth. I regard this note very important and I agree that we cannot assume that a victim does not have an agency while problematizing and making a public issue about it and seeking for recognition. However, as I will do by referring to the debates and literature, I only problematize the problem of agency in the politics of victimhood in reference to the dangers and consequences may be faced as undercutting agency, not erasing it. Some scholars also note that putting victimhood into political agenda does not necessarily result in competitive victimhood, but there is a need to tackle with its negative consequences. (Druiliolle and Brett 2018) By counting for this necessity, in this thesis, I aim for building on theoretical perspectives that allege criticisms and identify the possible negative consequences of the politics of victimhood in relation to the problem of agency; and on top of that I aim to present new ways of thinking victimhood in politics that will enable actors to overcome their victimhood and to enhance their agency.

The main concerning question of the thesis is then: How can we read the problem of agency in the politics of victimhood under the theoretical perspectives of Nietzsche, Arendt, and Foucault that might entitle us both to criticize it and to present alternative ways of thinking victimhood in politics to overcome this problem and victimhood? If, as Jacoby (2015) hypothesizes, victimhood is more common in democracies; if the politics of victimhood could result in either the overcome of victimhood or actors trapping in the last stage (political recognition) where victim status is utilized and functioned as a leverage point in politics; and if “victimhood can also be hurtful to the victim” in consequence of the difficulty for victim to be an independent agent in the course of seek for political recognition with respect to the impact and bindingness of political cultures and narratives, how could this frequent application of victimhood politics in representative democracies abstain from the negative consequences? Beyond abstaining from these negative consequences, how victimhood could be overcome? Here, by overcoming victimhood, I mean a recovery of the injuries with the empowerment of actors.

In order to answer these questions, at first, in the second chapter, the problematizations about the politics of victimhood along with its functions and consequences will be examined at length. By remarking on the historicity of convergence of the victimhood with identity politics, I will build on today’s competitive victimhood and then illustrate that it is not confined to the left, but also articulated in the conservative discourses. By also remarking on the findings about the politics of victimhood in the conflict societies and on how it became a rising culture.

In the third, fourth, and fifth chapters, by clarifying the theoretical frameworks of Friedrich Nietzsche, Hannah Arendt, and Michel Foucault, critiques and sets of proposals gained from their frameworks will be presented. Insights that will be gained by examining these thinkers may contribute to rethink the role of rising victimhood culture and its politics. The three main axes of these criticisms will be victimhood as a culture, victimhood as an identity formation, and victimhood as a form of power. And, the four main axes of the proposals will be different ways of understandings of values, power, identity and freedom that will empower agency to engage in creative action giving opportunity for overcoming victimhood.

Friedrich Nietzsche's criticisms to the conventional understanding and modernity have the biggest influence on the contemporary philosophical, social, and political thinking. His approach indicates that "ressentiment is a generalizable cultural/psychological phenomenon." (Horwitz 2018, 555) Therefore, when the grievance-based identities centralize resentment in the struggle for political recognition, it becomes a matter of culture and inevitably engages in the realm of morality. In this regard, the criticisms on the politics of victimhood regarding how it may provide a moral status and define social relations correspondingly can be held in deeper and comprehensive analysis in a Nietzschean framework in reference to difference between *master and slave moralities*. Also, because Nietzsche does not only criticize conventional moralities based on resentment but also offers a new way of thinking in terms of power relations and freedom with reference to *will to power* and of thinking social values with reference to *revaluation*, it will be fertile to examine victimhood and search the ways in which agency can be thought in a creative manner within his theoretical framework.

Hannah Arendt is regarded as the first contemporary political thinker who suggests a new way of defining politics in the face of lasting understanding of political power on the basis of violence. She explores the human capacities that are coming from the human condition, in order to query for ways in which human beings may still discover *identity* and find meaning in modern age. She aims to detach morality from political thought and points out the dangers of indoctrination. In her definition of politics, she centralizes action and plurality for politics; so that *political action* is the only state in which one can realize one self's *identity* through *speech*. In this regard, her negation of the previous understandings of politics fundamentally presents a criticism towards today's politics of victimhood. Furthermore, her theory of politics inherently presents an alternative way to think victimhood and agency in politics along with a detailed analysis of the importance of responsibility, promise and forgiving as directly relevant to thinking victimhood.

Michel Foucault, by cultivating on the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, poses new questions on the relationship between power, ethics, and knowledge; more importantly, he defines a new type of power (*Power*) that is reproduced in the discursive arena and resulting in *subjection*. He challenges the mere positive attributions to the developments of modernity on the basis of progression and underlines the productive and repressive aspects of Power. Bernasconi, Ruiz, and Lina (2018), while examining Chilean cases,

underlined the necessity to focus on the question ‘what defines victims of human rights violations’ rather than ‘who defines’ with a Foucauldian perspective by opening a new agenda for further research. Because “the category of victim is produced through a range of rules, conventions, procedures and technologies to authenticate the experiences of individuals and classify them into a network of categories.” (Durillole and Brett 2018, 14) Victimhood as a socio-political and even cultural construction of an identity can be examined as a process of subjectification in the relations of Power. The governmentality and technologies of power ensure not only totalization but also individualization through normalization. Hence, victimhood either as a form of culture or politics or a basis of cognition can be analyzed and criticized due to its objectification of subjects and normalization. Furthermore, in reference to Foucauldian reading of *resistance* along with problematizations and freedom, it will be discussed whether victimhood as a struggle may present a possibility to overcome victimhood and the problem of agency.

There are five main themes in the theoretical analyses of the three thinkers. First, their theories underline the necessity to detach from progressive and utilitarian outlooks. Second, they underline the necessity to detach from the influence of morality and tradition. Third, they criticize ideology and reading social relations in binary oppositions. Fourth, they all present a question on the possibilities for agency either in political terms or social terms. Fifth, they all present a different understanding of freedom from the usual senses. In relation to these themes, their theories present a set of possibilities for new and creative ideas and action. Although Nietzsche’s theoretical framework is more of a criticism on moralities, Arendt’s is more of a criticism on the understanding of politics, and Foucault’s is more of a criticism on the understanding of power and its relations, reading the politics of victimhood with their theories enable us to elaborate on new ways of issuing victimhood in politics that may lead creative and new actions with different perspectives on truth and values, power, freedom, resistance, subject, identity, and consequently on agency. Hence, the explanatory strength of the thinkers’ theoretical frameworks does not only remain to generate criticisms but is enriched in terms of proposing ways to overcome victimhood and of challenging the problem of agency.

## **2. PROBLEMATIZATIONS OF THE POLITICS OF VICTIMHOOD**

Victimhood is political because it corresponds to a collective experience and it is a social construction. It is a basis for individual and social identity along with its perceptions at both individual and collective levels. Individuals who has this identity, victims, seek a struggle to gain a political recognition. This search for political recognition is a clear indicator of political agency, but it is important to question the degree of agency due to the functions and consequences of the politics of victimhood that carry the risk of undercutting agency. The ontological primacy of the state or position of victimhood in politics is problematized in respect to those functions and consequences by many scholars since it may undercut both the group agency and agency of a victim per se. Victimhood can become a status in moral, social, cultural, and political terms. In this regard, it is important to highlight the problematizations of the politics of victimhood in a deeper investigation.

Therefore, in this chapter, firstly, the convergence of victimhood with identity will be examined in order to investigate how victimhood has become a salient phenomenon in contemporary politics. Secondly, the problematizations and researches on the victimhood in specific to its competitive form will be elaborated. Thirdly, the spread of the discourses on victimhood in the conservative discourses will be explored in order both to illustrate how the competitive victimhood is displayed by various groups and how it has gained weigh in politics regardless of ideological positions. Fourthly, the examinations on the functions and consequences the politics of victimhood in conflict societies will be clarified. Fifthly, how victimhood has become a rising culture in regard to the moral change as cause of cross-cultural conflicts will be explained to underline that politics of victimhood cannot be examined without taking into account that it has a cultural aspect.

## 2.1. Convergence of Victimhood with Identity

Victimhood has probably always been an issue for socio-political questions. However, because the sense of victimhood is not only an individual matter but also a collective one, it has converged with the identity politics which has been discussed since 1960s. Because it is a social construction of an identity, it will be helpful to examine its convergence and historicity and it will be helpful to understand the salience of the victimhood in politics in contemporary politics.

Furedi (2017) suggests that even though the identity politics first rose in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, it has gone through many transformations and it is possible to examine them under four phases. At first, it was displayed as a conservative reaction to the Enlightenment. The reaction was particularly towards the idea of universalism that was asserted as the new world outlook and to the argument of Enlightenment thinkers of how people make themselves through making history. This anti-universalistic reaction posed a particularistic understanding of politics through emphasizing the cultural differences and heterogeneity. The nationalist narratives had towered above the idea of unique characteristics of every nation which are authentic compared to the “abstract attachment to the universalism”. (Furedi 2017) This reaction formed into extreme versions like Nazism in the interwar period and the anti-universalistic particularistic view intertwined with racism. Identity politics on the basis of nationalism become marginalized after the Second World War. Buruma (1999) notes that although “memories, fictionalized or real, of shared victimhood formed the basis of much nineteenth-century nationalism”, nationalism is not “the main driving force for vicarious victims today.” (3) Horwitz (2018) also notes that the state-centered or national form of victimhood is different from contemporary victimhood. (554)

For Russell (1950), *The Superior Virtue of the Oppressed* was first seen for the poor previous to the French Revolution and the poor was always thought of the “rural poor”. With the French Revolution the poor and the virtue of the superior have become a party question. Later, in the nineteenth century, nationalism introduced “a substitute for the noble savage the patriot of an oppressed nation.” (59) Thus far, the attribution of virtue to the oppressed was unstable and transient; and it was seen only when the ruler or

oppressor was considered having bad conscience and only when their power is not secured anymore. Accordingly, “the idealizing of the victim is useful for a time: if virtue is the greatest of goods, and if subjection makes people virtuous, it is kind to refuse them power, since it would destroy their virtue.” (Russell 1950, 63) Yet, he also noted that even though the situation of being suppressed gave the superior virtue to those and attaining power would mean the loss of that virtue, sooner the oppressed class argued that their superior virtue is the reason for them to have or attain the power. But, contrary to the Furedi’s reading, Russell argued that defending the superior virtue of the oppressed became nonsense since the power had been equalized at the very last. (1950, 63)

In the second phase, the left revitalized identity politics two decades after the Second World War. Despite there were some dissonance with universal values, they have started to make for wider senses of solidarity and the focus on the class shift to identity. In 1960s and 1970s, the counterculture began to emerge against the dominant worldview of the Western culture with the effect of ongoing support for the Third World liberation movement. However, this radical identity did not lead to systemic ideology. Yet, with the personal-is-political logic of the counterculture identity politics was embraced and this has led a move “away from mass constituencies to single-issue campaigns”. (Judt 2007, 486) According to Furedi, while celebrating the particular and keeping the suspicion towards universal values, identity politics had become focused on the self, how it is perceived or its consciousness. Hence, it “was, and continuous to be, the politics of ‘it’s all about me’”; perhaps most importantly, “even when self-identity was expressed in group form, it was driven by the imperative of winning the recognition of others.” (Furedi 2004) The notion of social solidarity replaced with the ideal of diversity and difference; and the sacralization of identity.

In the third phase, identity politics started to be converged with the emerging politics of victimhood in 1970s. “Many of the left’s traditional allies came to be characterized as the victims of the system” and the left “regarded suffering as an important resource for mobilizing a constituency behind its causes.” (Furedi 2017) Historically the left has internalized and acted in accordance to the positions assessed around victimhood. (Bickley 2016) The meaning of victimization transformed with its expanded experiences in 1970s. Till then, it was about an exceptional harm that leads suffering. However, with the 1970s, it has become to be understood as “a condition integral to an unjust society”

and “being victims of society was a fundamental feature of identity.” (Furedi 2017) Victimhood had no longer been referring to an exceptional harm but -most of the time- to a systemically settled and unceasing harm that is intrinsic to the relevant unjust society. William Ryan published his book *Blaming the Victim* in 1971 and noted that the victims of inequality were unfairly blamed for the problems of American society. (1976, xiii) Yet, according to Furedi, this thesis meant a distinction between ruling elite and the all others on the basis of victimhood, as if others than ruling elite are potential victims. Also, this has put the understanding that the unquestionable position of the victims and a sort of moral authority attributed to them. In the aftermath of 1970s, either left or right recognized the legitimacy of the victimhood and it had become a crucial source of identity construction. Horwitz (2018) argues that “the victimhood as politics emerged from the contentious politics of 1960s, specifically the civil rights movement and its aftermath” and it can be observed predominantly in the history of women’s movement. (552) Gordon (2018) accounts for two large political phenomena that result in the intensification of legal and political consideration of the ‘victim’: First was the establishment of criminology and the second was the emergence of the identity politics along with social movements through the 1970s and 1980s. (6-7) The arguments based on victimhood have been part of the contemporary politics for longer than we assume.

The meaning of the victim has become expanded in reliance to the attribution of moral authority. While it was started to be used as a moral concept as “being a victim implies a certain degree of innocence or blamelessness, so that the victim is not held responsible for his or her fate”, it has started to be anticipated with the idea that the victims should be believed. (Weed 1995) This anticipation has become “institutionalized to the point where those accused of a misdeed are presumed to be guilty until they can prove their innocence.” (Furedi 2017) In political movements, the moral authority of the victimhood discourse started to be employed for recognition, respect, and validation. This also about the historical changes that enable the multiple international actors to issue matters not only at the state level but at the international level. The recognition through the problematization of victimhood have become an ethical question that does not only regard the states but also the international community. Also, as Meister (2002) notes, during Cold War, victimhood provided a moral basis for the politics of revolutionary and anti-revolutionary stands. Druliolle and Brett (2018) remark on how the demands of victims have become a basis for the change in national and international normative frameworks

that is accompanied with the changing international norms leaning towards peacebuilding after 1992.

According to Furedi (2017), the fourth phase of this transformation of identity politics accompanied with a therapeutic ethos that emphasizes the undebatable and unquestionable position of the victims as an obligation towards them, whereas any query is considered as a cultural crime because any criticism would mean a re-victimization and repentance of the trauma. In terms of the particularistic outlook and epistemology, there is a continuation since the nineteenth century. It is also common about how they assume that only the ones who experienced a particular culture framed their identity can understand each other and their reality. In this sense, “identity provides a patent on who can have a say or a voice about matters pertaining to a particular culture.” (Furedi 2017) However, this has been questioned in regard to the lessening space to debate or put criticism on the potential victims, and to how it can be censorious and illiberal. For the very last phase that we are in today, Furedi (2017) argues that the identity politics displays with a tendency towards individuation, separatism, and fragmentation rather than social solidarity. Concerns for and retreat to respective safe spaces and problematization of micro-aggressions such cultural appropriation -which is amenable to misread or uneven judgements- can be observed in an overarching manner.

There are many vantage points that can be supported or criticized about the last phase in Furedi’s analysis on the convergence of the victimhood with identity politics. Those discussions will be examined in the following section under the conceptualized problematization of *competitive victimhood*. And, there are also many aspects that are remaining to be highlighted such as how victimhood also become spread in conservative discourses and how it has become a rising form of culture.

## **2.2. Competitive Victimhood**

“There’s nothing new, unusual or unwelcome about politicians or others setting out ‘who they are’, but why is it that the constant rehearsal of identities has become crucial to establishing any kind of public voice?” (Bickley 2016)

The ontological primacy of the state of victimhood in politics leaves it open to manipulation and instrumentation; consequently, it becomes a matter of competition. The question on 'whose victimhood will be issued' is important because although the issues related to victimhood or victimization are quite important for actors to engage in politics, to ask for restitutions for wrongs done, and to call for political reform, nevertheless it gives political actors a distinct power to advance their cause and equip them with immunities from criticisms. As a potential danger, it carries the risk to become a political commodity that is attained by the political actors for almost any cause that they pursue. There is an ever-present danger that the experiences of victimhood might be co-opted into political claims by groups and states. (Lu 2017, 26) If we also regard how victimhood is part of identity construction today perhaps more than ever before, the victimhood itself become a matter of competition that seeks to judge who is the 'true victim', because it is considered as a moral and political leverage that can conserve and secure the popular consent of either only of the particular community or of the whole society. Therefore, where the victimhood is used to strengthen one's position in the face of another who would also issue victimhood yield a field of competitive victimhood in politics that traps actors rehearse and speak through only of their victim identities. In short, the politics of victimhood may lead a competition on the moral or political truth.

The examination of the *Drama Triangle* of the culture of victimhood done by Stephen Karpam (2014) is used to criticize and point out the consequences of the politics of victimhood. The model shows that people tend to organize their daily life in accordance to the positions of a victim, a persecutor, and a rescuer, as it can be seen in the fairy tale of Red Riding Hood (the little red, the wolf, and the woodcutter). This tendency reveals itself through creative reassignments of those position to reach personal goals. (Bickley 2016) The problem is that victimhood becoming the truth. In such case, it is not possible to acknowledge our part in the problem, to recognize the causes of them (the persecutors) or to analyze the mentality that reinforces such behavior, and to overcome the problems in a more comprehensive way, since actors may treat victimhood as a political source and the positioning as of the drama triangle instigates conflict and polarization. (Breen-Smyth 2018) Drama triangle is a kind of vicious circle where each actor (victim, persecutor, and rescuer) starts to feel more and more victim as long as they reassign their positions according to victimhood, and this spreads easily without certain resolution. If one fixes him/herself to the victim position/identity, he would continue to see others as either

persecutor or rescuer. If she/he will be disappointed of the rescuer, who is supposed to save her/him, then she/he will feel victimized again and again; or any kind of interaction would have started to be interpreted as a slight or an attempt of assault. That is why it is important to distinguish victimhood and the politics of victimhood. Brooks (2015) has also a similar criticism: It is important to distinguish the fight for victims and the promotion of victimhood culture. Aside from how victimhood culture in a way restricts the free speech of those whom are considered as persecutors, it is also problematic in terms of a movement's leadership. People either present themselves as saviors or target a common enemy. "In all cases, they treat people less as individuals and more as aggrieved masses." (Brooks 2015)

When the politics become an area where actors pose themselves only as victims and position others in respect to one's own position of victim, then it becomes problematic because it reinforces to think only in terms of victimhood and reinforces polarization in the relevant society. Umair Haque (2018) also argues that the politics of victimhood detains the victims and activists from generating new solutions by sticking too much on the victimhood discourse. In accordance, he notes that "the politics of victimhood, of resentment and grievance, leave us simmering with anger and shame, instead of giving us the power to lead, create, and transform." (Haque 2018) He furthers his claim and notes that the politics of victimhood is a function of declining society and it reinforces the predatory system to abuse them more because contestation for victimhood is not about envisioning a future for the society. Although his point can be criticized because it underestimates the power of the political actors, it has a point in terms of pointing out how a political deadlock may result in perpetuation of the victimization. So, in a way, when victimhood becomes competitive, it limits the social imagination for a better society where the oppression and injustice may become extinct. Victims may become blinded to the possibilities for a different future since they think social relations in antagonistic relations and abstain from taking responsibilities. (Williams 2008, 90) In the absence of such imagination and only focus on the 'true victim' may mean the legitimization of the current system.

One of the most important problem is about the consequence that competitive victimhood and people's self-perception in the frame of victimhood may undermine the experiences of the victims. Jamie Bartlett (2015) warns about the dangerous allure of the victim

politics and mainly points out how spread of the politics of victimhood may harm the victims and prevent them speaking about their experiences. As a result of modern life and hyper-capitalism hollowing out the identities, people are in search of authenticity and they become inclined to think of themselves as victims and of having a “communal identity based on sentimental solidarity of remembered victimhood”, although personally their respective positions in society are actually well. (Bartlett 2015) While recognizing the importance of feelings in the manners of victimhood, he problematizes how it is used as the sole arbiter of the decisions we make because anyone would feel oppressed, especially considering the possibility of its abuse. Therefore, if we accept the truth could only be spoken by the victimized people, then the political ground will not be for the equals. Victimhood may relieve individuals from personal accountability. (Horwitz 2018, 556) So, it would also mean a loss of self-critique and demonization of the other. (Williams 2008, 90) Hence, Bartlett’s first criticism is that judgements heavily based on feelings are anti-political. Secondly, by referring to Russell’s (1950, 61) *the virtue of the oppressed*, he notes that the oppressed ones tend to sentimentalize the superior virtue rather than living such superior qualities. And, even though this moral superiority is accepted by all, this “reverence” could mean “a consolation for inferiority” as in the case of the nineteenth century Britain where women were accepted as superior in terms of virtue and they were kept out of businesses for the very same reason. Thirdly, focusing on victim’s feelings or the degrees of victimhood in public debates lessen the place for debates on the structural causes that could be dealt with. Fourthly, the over-emphasis on victim politics may drive victims to despair in the face of unfair environment and society which are presented as always against them or will never understand them. This would mean pushing them towards the margins and even convincing them that their cause is helpless. “You will find this sense of victimhood sitting squarely behind many of today’s extreme political movements.” (Bartlett 2015) As for all these reasons, the vigilant use of victim politics will do not much to help genuine victims but harm their causes.

### **2.3. Victimhood in Conservative Discourses**

The competition on victimhood that is emerged with regard to the moral and political leverage victimhood provides is not only utilized by the left but also the right. Although conservatives have posed an anti-victim and anti-revolutionary stance in politics and criticized the left for the playing the victim card, the recent debates and literature show that the politics of victimhood and its discourses are not confined to the left. Predominantly this has been examined and discussed for American politics, but there is also a growing literature on Turkish case along with others such as Canada. The literature does not only show that conservatives may well engage in the politics of victimhood, but in fact several parties may claim victimhood simultaneously. (Leider 2018) In this regard, it is important to highlight the debates and the findings in the literature to reveal how the politics of victimhood gained weighed today despite the ideological differences and stance taken as against to victim politics. In this section, after referring the debates in American literature, examinations from Turkey and other examples will be elaborated.

The politics of victimhood has become a significant issue in American politics. Many columnists and scholars have problematized the dead ends that the politics of victimhood might lead in American politics. Especially after 2016 presidential elections in the USA and the incumbency takeover of the Republican Party in the leadership of Donald Trump, the number of articles about the politics of victimhood have rapidly increased. They have pointed out how conservatives also reframed this historically known as leftwing phenomenon into their language. Due to the “powerful and defining dynamic of politics of victimhood”, despite conservatives criticize the left for playing the ‘victim card’, they also engage in politics of victimhood. (Horwitz 2018, 558) And it has been argued that although historically the left has internalized and acted through the Karpam’s drama triangle more than the right, it is also seen in the right and it has gained weigh in the conservative discourse. (Bickley 2016) As it is seen, it has been discussed whether victim politics is pernicious; whether it is a feature of the leftwing ideologies; and whether it is a recent phenomenon. Heer (2018) argued that is not pernicious and “it has been an inescapable part of democratic politics”. Victim politics had emerged simultaneously with the rise of democracy in the eighteenth century. Therefore, it is not a recent phenomenon that is only of leftwing ideologies. It has given power for those who have suffered to be able to speak about the suffering and it has gained them agency. This was a response to the arguments about how victimhood politics undermines the agency of the victims since they will only or mostly be perceived and recognized as victims. As Chait

(2018) argues they will not be recognized as “agents” but will be “reduced to the status of victim”. But, for Heer (2018), victimhood and agency cannot be read in a dichotomous relationship, to the contrary, they reinforce each other. And, Heer criticized Dougherty (2018) and Chait (2018) by arguing that they have misdiagnosed the problem of overemphasizing victimhood. For him, it is “the self-pity of some of the most privileged members of society, and the cottage industry of performative suffering it fosters.” (Heer 2018) As it is seen, the query on the relationship between agency and victimhood in American politics is an important issue that is not only debated in reference to the left, but also the right.

Dougherty (2018) poses the new version of (today’s) victim politics as a problem by referring Sykes’s (1992) criticism on how victim politics has been displaying for individual interests, revenge, and competition, and for lasting political changes, material advantages and moral status in politics ever since victim voice has become more influential in American society. Victimhood started to be used as a shield or a garb that is actually made for personal matters. The victim has almost become the symbol of the modern society and in a society full of victims, there will be no one left to accept personal responsibilities. (MacArthur 1995) However, Dougherty puts the saturation of victimhood politics beyond Sykes’ problematization. Victim politics has been read through the history of left, how Cultural Marxism, Frankfurt School, also Antonio Gramsci -with his new class of *subalterns* whom are excluded by the hegemonic cultural power- had put the victim into the center of politics, by some conservatives. As Paul Waldman (2018) argues that till today the politics of victimhood was seen as something belongs to the left, but it has started to be applied and wielded by Trump and the Republicans. Furthermore, in this stage, it has reached new heights where the moral status of victimhood is realized by the right, whether it is earned or not and where become a debate on who is so to say: “the real victim”. (Waldman 2018) Some has also argued that the victim politics that has become industrialized is a hollow and its origin is not American. (Prasannarajan 2018) Many historical figures whom are still memorialized today are the victims of a suffering. Emphasis on the victimhood that is caused by the majoritarian systems is a recent achievement. However, for Prasannarajan, the point is: how the industrialized victimhood is undermining the actual victims while being adapted to the lasting political changes.

Turning back to Dougherty, the new version of the victim politics is rather a result of progressive politics and utilitarianism; a result of reducing politics into mere policy making process and of measuring human passion only in the form of suffering. Meaning that, the leverage of the victim position to have a public voice and being recognized is exploited because it is already hard to have such a leverage in the face of a politics that is reduced and perceived as technical policy making by the ruling class. This orientation leaves agents without option but to use a short-cut of the victimhood status to break into the political debate since suffering would have more attention and value. This transformation of politics causes people to think of their rights and of their position in the society through their group identity, and less and less about their deeds in life. “Claims for rights are made in a corporate persona.” (Dougherty 2018) The political demands are made as a part or member of a community, rather than as personal demands or speak for ones’ self. “It’s almost as if each individual finds meaning only insofar as he conforms to an abstracted or imagined political model.” (Dougherty 2018) Because the alternative option to this conformity is becoming a nerd to search and make a case of your suffering, we have been witnessing a denser saturation of victim politics. That is why the victim politics is not central to the left, but it is intriguing for the right, too. The political leverage or the ‘ontological primacy’ as Jeffrey and Candeia (2006, 289) calls, of the victimhood cannot be confined to the left, it has become spread and popular among right too due to the ‘political necessities’ as part of the utilitarian outlook and the progressive understanding of politics.

In Turkey, there have been an increasing employment of the discourse on victimhood by both left and right-wing actors. This has become a particular issue in the course of the rule of AKP (Justice and Development Party) since 2002. The discourse of victimhood has been frequently employed by the AKP and in both academia and the daily politics, this has been substantially referred. Yılmaz (2017), while examining AKP’s discourse of victimhood by using genealogy as a methodology, points out how “a strong sense of victimhood, a discourse of social suffering, and complementary bodily performances, which mobilize rancor, resentment, and revengefulness, are fundamental elements of Turkish-Islamist ideology”; how the discourse serves as a dynamic of identity formation; and even how “this subject formation opens the way for identification with authoritarian figures in the Turkish case.” (1) It is important to note that the employment of the victimhood discourse by the Turkish conservatives is not confined to AKP but has a

history. Açikel (1996) examines the ‘sanctified victimhood’ in the conservative communities of Turkey as a potential will to power of the masses who are de-territorialized fictitiously, socially, and culturally in the face of the rigor of late capitalism and fast modernization. He noted that victimhood, rather than a fiction at societal level, is an ideology that reveals the relationship of the collective subjects with reality; the will to power it contains is a result of the development of capitalism in this geography; its rise can be actualized at the expense of the deprivation of others rather than a representation of the majority; and as long as it is articulated with the rising class it will serve the reproduction of capitalism. (Açikel 1996, 187-188) Yiyit (2010), in his master dissertation, examined this sanctified victimhood that is incorporating with the previous victimhood and that also appears in the discourse of AKP. He also pointed out while the victimhood becomes a discourse, it leads a vicious circle that is deprived of the productive ground of politics, because it is employed as a will to power.

Yılmaz (2017)’s analysis underlines that the employment of the victimhood discourse is accompanied with supporters’ identification with party and the leader, while social ethos and identity formation are promoted by the ruling elite. Accordingly, by employing the discourse of victimhood that is accompanied with the negative sentiments such as resentment and revenge, the power establishes a ground on where its potential supporters would internalize the reactionist behaviors and those behaviors will be legitimized. This legitimization works to create an ideological affinity between the party and its potential supporters that will maintain and enhance the hegemony. (Yılmaz 2018, 23) The authoritarian Islamic populist victimhood imaginations contains a reactionist political ethos that executes particular representations about both itself and the oppositions. (Yılmaz 2018, 35) And, this ethos works for the ruling party to establish hegemony through constructing an identity for the political actors supporting it in its historical establishment and to mobilize their will/desire in the direction of that imagination. (Yılmaz 2018, 38)

The discourse of victimhood that is used or adopted either by the dominant elite or the oppositions groups who could retain a substantive position in politics, carries the risk of cropping personal narratives and the experiences of victims for the sake of rhetorical power of the discourse in the political arena. Additionally, a hegemonic discourse inevitably generalizes the experiences of the victims under an ideological framework.

Considering the power of elites in a political regime, the ideological framework of the discourse of victimhood is shaped by the maneuvers of the political elite who owns or stakes a claim on the discourse of victimhood. Therefore, regardless of the ideological positions of the victims, the discourse is reproduced within an ideological framework that is supported by political elites (either left or right, conservative, secular, republican...) and it is possibly used to integrate the subaltern into that ideological framework. Because, a discourse works to create and strengthen a political imagination that “brings into existence a symbolic and material sphere in politics, a place where actors can convey political and emotional messages that function to build trans-individual political bonds.” (Yılmaz 2017, 5)

In parallel to the common problematizations, the Turkish literature presents a similar argument: Because the victimhood poses an indisputable starting point, it becomes a short-cut to modify the framework of the public debate and the political outcomes in Turkish politics. “In general, a strong assertion of victimhood also works as a system of judgement and restricting perspective, within which agents are politically pacified and hold captive to negative reactive feelings like resentment, while it incessantly calls for retribution and will to power...” (Yılmaz 2017, 4) As a consequence, this pragmatic tendency or the will to power leads the standardization of the discourses on victimhood while reducing the various experiences of the victims into a default political narrative and pacifying them. Furthermore, it is employed to establish a hegemony that does not only conserve the consent of the people but also mobilize their will in the orientation of the hegemonic rule. Taking into account all of these, the Turkish literature highlights that the discourse of victimhood is not only used to contest power, but it can also be used to maintain power and it may establish a hegemony that in a way utilizes the consent of subalterns without proposing a productive political ground.

Kelly Gordon (2018), in a doctorate thesis, examined the mobilization of victimhood in the conservative discourse in Canada and underlined that although the literature defines conservative politics and ideology as against the victim politics, contemporary Canadian conservative are increasingly engaging with the politics of victimhood and arguments on the basis of victimhood. Consequently, the politics of victimhood and application of the relevant discourses are not confined to progressive movements. The politicians are aware of the victim frames and the political power of the arguments based upon those frames.

Victimhood as a salient phenomenon and a diffusive discourse may well serve as a “persuasive and compelling political tool” at the ‘affective’ level. (Gordon 2018, 11)

#### **2.4. Victimhood in Conflict Societies**

Especially in conflict societies, the sense of self-perceived victimhood is quite common, and it has been problematized since it can lead to a cycle of violence. Bar-Tal et al. (2009) examines the self-perceived victimhood as a major theme at the collective level in intractable conflicts and they remark on the consequences of a shared mindset related to the self-perceived victimhood that prolong the conflict process and inhibits the possibilities for peacemaking. The mind-set shared by the collective groups who perceive themselves as victims of their rivals is unlikely to change while it is accompanied with negative emotions and teleological understanding. (2009, 242) There are a number of functions and consequences of the sense of collective victimhood, as Bar-Tal and others depict. Collective victimhood and actions taken by extension of it, on the one hand, warn society about the harmful acts of the opponent to gain immunity; on the other hand, draw the attention of the international community to gain some help and support. (Bar-Tal et al. 2009) They frame the way in which one relate to world, how one perceives the nature and the causes of the conflict, and how it should be judged, and which humanitarian norms should be defended. Collective victimhood brings a cognitive ground that provides explanations about the conflict and the roles of actors, who is responsible and who is not, besides of enabling individuals to cope with the stress growing in the conflictful relations. It provides a moral justification that the rival is responsible for the cause of conflict and ongoing violence and even a justification for the violent actions that are taken by the groups who consider themselves as victims since it is formalized as a defense.

It also leads to reinforcement and internalization of some senses such as: differentiation and superiority as consequences of moral justification. It cultivates in an egocentric reading of the reality. Mack (1990) uses the term ‘egoism of victimhood’ to refer how the sense of victimhood may lead to an over focus on the experiences, suffering, and fate of oneself, along with a biased selection of information. (Bar-Tal et al. 2009) This also

causes a lack of empathy for the opponent and a lack of consideration about the possibility that one's own group might have caused suffering of others. Usually, goals of the victim group are well-justified while they delegitimize their rival since their rival associated with the harm done or a potential future harm. The state of victimhood is regarded in moral sense so that it gives a superior moral status to the victims and justifies a necessity for recognition of their state by sympathy and for an immunity from criticism to avoid re-victimization. (Kanan 1999) In this regard, the sense of being victim can become an element in the culture of a society. The senses of collective victimhood constitute a collective memory and an ethos for the community. It reinforces patriotic feelings and creates a ground for solidarity and mobilization, as it was observed in the case of Sri Lanka. (Ramanathapillai 2006) "Activities and groups that serve to strengthen victim identities and communities can sometimes lock people into the past or encourage partisan groupings among sufferers." (Huysse 2003, 63-64) Consequently, it leads to a process of identity-formation, especially in the cases of conflicts of long duration. (Adwan and Bar-On 2001)

As a result of all, differentiation and superiority become means to create social dominance. (Sidanius and Pratto 1999) When the status of victim is institutionalized, it allows for escaping from responsibility and accountability. (Smyth 2001, 126) Consequently, different parties become inclined to contest for the status of victimhood. It becomes a matter of competition to gain a social dominance and a moral status that is considered as superior and an indicator for the necessity of an immunity from criticism and responsibility that should be taken, as it is observed in the case of Palestinian and Israeli conflict. (Nadler and Shnabel 2006) This moral status also results in a justification or rationalization of the ingroup negative behavior and a reduction in the guilt of the group. (Bar-Tal et al. 2009) This causes to reinforce the violent actions and their justification in the conflict zones; when the aggression of a victimized group is justified in moral terms either to take revenge or for defense, it outlasts the violence and creates a situation of "victim-to-victimizer cycle". (Bar-Tal et al. 2009) Also, although victimhood does not preclude agency, due to the defining dynamic of victimhood hegemonically the social positions, as communities against each other, it may undermine the possibilities for open conversations about both the past injuries and the future. (Leider 2018)

## 2.5. The Rise of Victimhood Culture

In February 2018, two sociologists, Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning, published a book named: *The Rise of Victimhood Culture: Microaggressions, Safe Spaces, and the New Culture Wars* in which they examined how victimhood as a newly emerged culture and a new moral code function as a source of moral worth and an execution of power in the concrete examples of how slights of one's ethnicity or cultural characteristics might be referred to as "microaggressions" by campus activists and there is an increasing tendency in American university campuses that of different cultural groups retreat to the respective safe spaces. Their journal article that was published was the premise of the book in which they examined how concerns for *microaggressions* have resemblance with "other conflict tactics in which the aggrieved actively seek the support of third parties as well as those that focus on oppression" and how grievance based cross-cultural conflicts have led to a large-scale moral change. (Campbell and Manning 2014) The emergence of the victimhood culture is put as an exemplary for this and they pointed out how the victimhood culture is different than honor and dignity cultures of the past on both of their works.

Accordingly, victimhood culture combines different aspects of dignity and honor cultures. Honor is displayed with the high sensitivity to slights; but, in response to slights, as in the dignity cultures, people refrains from violent vengeance and they seek for a third party or an authority figure to rely on. Self-help in the form of dueling or fighting as it was in old moral cultures, is no more an option. (Brickley 2016) Accordingly, "the combination of high sensitivity with dependence on others encourages people to emphasize or exaggerate the severity of offenses" and it may create an obsession on eradication of oppression and injustice. (Lehmann 2018)

Campbell and Manning, in the interview that they gave in Quillette, note that today's victimhood culture is on its extreme forms and its concrete examples can be observed in American college and university campuses. (Lehmann 2018) The increasing complaints about the microaggressions, demanding and creating safe spaces go along with punishing those microaggressions and in a way constraining some speakers who might offend the

victims. This new morality creates a moral hierarchy since making moral judgements gains moral status for some through reputation and respectability while it is on the contrary for the condemned or the ones who might act and speak as an offender. As in the honor cultures, victimhood culture defines some virtues over others. However, the obsession or over-focus on the eradication of oppression and privileges “can lead to the similar kinds of perversities that come from neglecting other virtues in honor cultures.” (Lehmann 2018) The focus on the oppression and eradication of it may lead to the reduction of diversity of moral discourses and judgements; and it may preclude polyphonic discussions with a variety of perspectives, if, only the victimhood terminology is considered as worthy of notice. Furthermore, the most important difference between honor culture and victimhood culture is that in honor cultures, the moral status of yours is about the way you behave, but in victimhood culture it is about your identity and someone else’s treatment of you. The virtue in victimhood culture in this sense is not something internal, but its condition is external.

Campbell and Manning (2014), as others, problematize the victimhood culture in terms of how it leads to a dead end. On the one hand, it leaves less incentive for good behavior since the virtue is not to be possessed by behaving in a way as in the honor culture, but by becoming victim through someone else’s act on you. In this regard, it may lead people to portray themselves as victim and blame others for that in order to attain the designated virtue, thereby the moral status, in victimhood cultures. Ultimately, it is a bad behavior of lying that victimhood culture might lead to. On the other hand, the victim status may also come from one’s group identity than one’s individual experience. This introduces a distinction between the group members and others on the basis of being victim. While all members of the group are considered as victims, others are not and not going to be. This is also problematic for Campbell and Manning in two ways: First, it is morally inappropriate to assume no inherent worth within some people and assume only for some others; the new moral hierarchy of the victimhood culture undermines this. Secondly, “whites, men, and others who do not have victimhood status are unlikely to accept a new morality and a new moral hierarchy in which they’re at the bottom. And they may end up embracing one in which they’re at the top.” (Lehmann 2018) Accordingly, the recent rise of the alt-right white nationalist movement or attitude can be read as an example of this sort of reaction.

As of the previous observations their study also shows that even though the discourse on victimhood is a leftwing phenomenon, it has started to spread over the right. Conservatives also have embarked on pointing out their victimhood and most importantly they started to more and more engage in and embrace the subsequent assumptions of victimhood culture. Victimhood has started to become a matter of contestation over who is more disadvantaged, among the left and right. This competitive victimhood narrowed the place for solid criticisms and degraded the attempts of speech for the unlike since any criticism and query could easily be labeled as offensive. Thus, for Campbell and Manning, victimhood cultures do not seem conducive to freedom of speech and academic freedom, especially considering its spread in university campuses, in regard to the implications of competitive victimhood.

Microaggressions and cultural appropriation are considered as “something only people in designated privileged groups can be guilty of”; and the offense is usually defined according to the group identities and “framed as a matter of collective oppression”. (Lehmann 2018) This convergence of victimhood with identities led to a political outlook and discursive framework shaped by the victimhood culture. Debates on this matter, to a part, evolved around the moral hierarchy of the identity groups and ideological intolerance. Even though there are many types of victimhood and it drives us to reconsider and rebuild the necessity of legal, social, economic, and political justice, it has also become a source of power as well as a moral authority in political discussions. This moral authority works as a leverage in the progressive understanding of politics.

### **3. FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE: MASTER AND SLAVE MORALITIES, WILL TO POWER, AND REVALUATION**

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) is known for his criticism to the conventional understanding of philosophy, criticisms of Judeo-Christian and liberal ethics, his conceptualization of *will to power*, and his alternative to the *master and slave moralities*. He may be accepted as the first post-modern philosopher who have built a solid philosophy as opposed to the modern philosophy. His books *the Birth of Tragedy* (1872), *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), and *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887) present a theoretical basis for his philosophy. Although he deals with diverse questions in each book, examination of these three main books together may enable us to understand his conceptualization and philosophical framework.

Nietzsche's philosophical outlook entitles us to generate criticisms for modern times and modern politics, almost in all matters. Examining today's raising phenomenon of the victimhood, how it has become a form of culture and a form of politics with Nietzschean perspective may be fertile to generate criticisms and understand its conventional grounds. In order to do so, in this chapter, firstly, the main framework of Nietzsche's philosophy and works will be explained in constructive way. Secondly, today's identity politics converged with victimhood will be examined and criticized under his framework by referring the concepts such as slave morality, will to power, and resentment. Lastly, we will question what kind of an alternative could be presented to issue victimhood in politics by relying on the theoretical framework of Nietzsche, especially by referring to the concepts such as revaluation of all values, forgetfulness, and life affirmation.

### 3.1. Nietzsche's Philosophical Framework

In order to build up and understand the basis of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical approach, firstly, we need to refer his examination of the Greek tragedies by the analysis of *Apollonian* and *Dionysian* cults. In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche explains these two cults in a dichotomous relationship since Apollo, the god of light, symbolizes rationality, self-control and emphasizes self-consciousness through the art of sculpture and plastic; while Dionysus, the god of festivals, symbolizes annihilation, exceed, and loss of the self through wine or the art of music. Apollonian cult proposes isolation of the self in order to achieve the knowledge about the self, it aims to create a form and an appearance that are for containment. However, Dionysian cult proposes the integrity of the self, also by acknowledging the nature, the natural instincts, passion, and emotions. Intoxication, brute realism, and absurdity are constituents of the Dionysian cult. Therefore, one launches an order and the other launches a chaos. "And so, wherever Dionysian broke through, the Apollonian was cancelled, absorbed, and annihilated." (Nietzsche 2008, 32)

Even though for Nietzsche, these two cults are complementary to each other in tragedies which reflect the human condition and existence, in a way he tries to remind us the motives of the Dionysian cult, since it reveals the will and provides an opportunity for change while Apollonian cult brought the idea of individuation along with torment. The idea of individuation that necessitated torment to achieve or know one's self held out in Socratic tradition; the Apollonian cult is distorted by the *aesthetic Socratism* which principled knowledge as virtue and intelligibility as beauty. (Nietzsche 2008, 70) Accordingly, this had introduced the theoretical ideal man, also by undermining the motives of the Dionysian cult.

The figure of the *satyr* that is half human and half animal, resembles the rational side on the one hand and the animalistic side of man on the other hand in the Greek tragedies. For Nietzsche, the satyr chorus was "a living wall erected against the pounding storm of reality", since it was "a more real, more complete image of existence than the man of culture who commonly considers himself the sole reality." (Nietzsche, 2008, 47) It represented the original relationship between human beings and themselves, and phenomena. But for the conventional understanding, as for Euripides, the chorus

symbolized the “ideal spectator” which was rather unknown for the Greeks according to Nietzsche. (Nietzsche 2008, 48) With the plays of Euripides who was influenced from Socrates, tragedies had become a stage where morality and rationality are told and rehearsed to the people, “the spectator”; and they died. “‘Knowledge is virtue; sin is the result of ignorance; the virtuous man is the happy man’: in these three basic forms of optimism lies the death of the tragedy.” (Nietzsche, 2008, 78)

It is possible to argue that positing people as the spectator, introducing chorus as a means of preaching morality and of instructing rationality, introducing “the ideal man” whose virtue is knowledge, are meant to create what we call today: public opinion. According to Nietzsche, any kind of virtue would be considered as an obstacle in front the experience which actually acquires knowledge, in Ancient Greek. There was only what they called: *arete* and it meant excellence in any kind of work and doing something in the perfect sense. In the following explanations of Nietzsche’s views, we will see that perfection is very central to his philosophy as well as *revaluation* of values that is through experience. In this manner, his emphases on the Dionysian motives of annihilation of the self-control, ecstasy, and so to say a constant state of becoming foretell us about the grounds of his philosophy.

*Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals* are parallel works to *The Birth of Tragedy*, even though the subject is not tragedies but moral grounds of modernity. Genealogy is a method of tracing the ancestries of a matter, a phenomenon. The basis his critiques are put and built in these books. While tracing the ancestries of the day’s morality, Nietzsche questions and examines the Judeo-Christian morality and liberal ethics by challenging the lasting normative value sets that have been deeply imbedded in human life. Nietzsche’s criticisms are almost omnidirectional. Aside from religion (especially Christianity and Judaism), moral values and philosophy, all, such as progressive understanding of history and modern political currents are put under the scope. As for the political manners, Nietzsche criticizes equality, autonomous individualism, egalitarianism, pragmatism or welfarism, communitarianism or socialism, social-Darwinism, nationalism, and democracy which also present a kind of moral understanding. For him, there is no such thing as everyone is equal or valuable to the same degree.

He coherently builds his criticisms to various manners by referring to a lasting ignorance about the very essence of human relations -that is *the will to power*-; and to how, in a manner of speaking, the potential of human beings is undermined because of the conformity to the conventional understandings. For him, being human is something to be transcended, and ongoing moralities prevent us to do so. He criticizes such manners through the ideal of asceticism, the notions of *guilt* and *ordeal*. He examines two types of morality: *slave* and *master*. Accordingly, the ideals of ordeal, pity, modesty and altruism are the central values of the slave morality. Happiness is not for today's world. The idea of ordeal brings the sense that the world is not meaningless, but it is meant for the next world. There is an inherent understanding of progression. On the other hand, pity on one's self is a way of escaping from the pain, misery, and pity on others is about one's feeling of powerful and letting the other to feel too. Modesty is something one equalizes himself with the other who is not equal to him in reality. And, altruism is a way of presenting one's self to another. These are all manners that belong to slaves. Because, slaves are inclined to affirm their positions.

The relationship between a *creditor* and a *debtor* as a model is examined to observe how this relationship is reconfigured in slave morality. The creditor is someone who may act cruelly against the debtor when the debt is not paid. But in modern times, creditor will be ashamed if he acts cruelly. The notions of *good conscience* and *bad conscience* originated in this reconfiguration of the creditor-debtor relationship. The idea of personal responsibility and the feeling of *guilt* accompanied this change, while good conscience is praised, and bad conscience is considered as the basis for evil. "The darkness of the sky over man has always deepened in proportion to the growth of the shame of man before man." (Nietzsche 2008, 48) The darkness was however not just the conformity to the slave morality, but also the increase in the *passive nihilist* attitude towards life in the European continent, for Nietzsche. Passive nihilism is about a constant rejection of everything, every values and norms, and saying "no" while not putting or creating new values instead. "The sight of the man is now a wearying sight—what is nihilism today, if not this? ... We are weary of man..." (Nietzsche 2008, 28) Nietzsche is known to be nihilist however he criticized spreading nihilism in the European continent. His criticism is towards the passive nihilism which brings a conformity not to generate new values or search for meaning. Unlike passive nihilism, active nihilism is a dynamic state in which one revalues the values in the course of questioning and taking them with a pinch of salt.

### 3.1.1. Pathos of Distance

*Pathos of distance* indicates the difference between a noble and a servile. But this difference is not about the social status, but about the values. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he gives the example of an eagle and a lamb and leaves the reader with question of whether a lamb resents to an eagle because of preying. The resentfulness of mediocre to noble resulted with a designation of hierarchical value sets that condemns the noble while praising the resentment of the mediocre. This slave morality as a response to the masters constituted what is understood as *good* and *evil*. “The pathos of nobility and distance, the enduring, dominating, and fundamental overall feeling of a higher ruling kind in relation to a lower kind, to a ‘below’ — that is the origin of the opposition between ‘good’ and ‘bad’” (Nietzsche 2008, 13) For Nietzsche, what is *un-egoistic* does not mean the good. However, along with the Judeo-Christian ethics that constituted the liberal ethics makes the distinction between good and bad on the basis of what is egoistic or not. The ideals of ordeal and ascetism enacted in a new morality that is put against aristocratic values. “*Herd instinct*” showed itself by constructing an exclusive and antagonistic relation between what is good and bad, and imposing the human conscience accordingly. (Nietzsche 2008, 13)

The noble person who has the master morality: is the judge of its own actions; decides what is harmful or not; does not act due to debt or a duty that is estimated for her/him by others; is able to reverse what s/he knows; reveres whatever s/he knows of her/himself; therefore, s/he is able to create her/his own moral code that is self-glorifying. However, this autonomy does not mean that this noble person does not help the unfortunate ones. S/he can help them, however, not out of pity “rather from the urgency created by an excess of power.” (Nietzsche 2008, 154) The noble person also reveres her/his power in and over her/himself. The noble person is who is able to speak and remain silent; who is able to harshly criticize her/himself and enjoys this; who also respects things that are severe. Therefore, the noble person is who can have her/his own morals apart from the crowd whose morality is based on selflessness of its members.

The slave morality on the other hand, is very different from the master morality, because it exhorts people selflessness in the circle of equals. Think of the ones who have suffered, what would be the common value judgement that they have, Nietzsche asks. They would be suspected of everything, pessimistic about the whole human condition and they would condemn all human beings along with. (Nietzsche 2008, 155) They would not trust the noble and his reverence towards its power, to the contrary, slaves would not see the virtues of the noble and would not believe the happiness of masters. Helping, pity, mindfulness, kind heart would be praised since these qualities are the only means for “an enduringly oppressive existence” against the masters; that is why “slave morality is essentially a morality of utility.” (Nietzsche 2006, 156) Who they call as ‘good person’ is who is harmless for them. Nietzsche also argues that whenever the slaves have an upper hand against others, they inclined to use the words ‘good’ and ‘stupid’. And the last fundamental difference between the two moralities is that while slaves long for freedom and are in the search of happiness, nobles ebulliently continue to revere their judgements.

In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche asserts that all men of *ressentiment*, most of the time, lie to themselves to convince themselves; they invent their fortune “through a glance at their enemies.” (2008, 23) This can be interpreted in two ways: Firstly, the men of resentment are doomed to lie to themselves in order to achieve their invented fortune; and they can only motivate themselves by focusing and objectivizing their enemies. Secondly, as Nietzsche puts, slaves assign a strength to themselves that in reality they do not have by glancing -perhaps imitating to having- the strength of their masters, this assumption of strength is what keep them inventing their fortune. However, could a state of weakness be presented as a strength? For Nietzsche, “to the demand of strength that it should not express itself as strength.” (2008, 29) Therefore, it does not make sense if a weakness is proposed as a strength that is fortune to dominate, to triumph, and to find compensation in an imaginary revenge. Even though “the slave revolt in morals begins when resentment itself creative and ordains values”, there is no creative act in it, since contrary to “the noble morality which grows from a triumphant affirmation of itself, the slave morality from the outset says no to an ‘outside’, to an ‘other’, to a ‘non-self’”. (Nietzsche 2008, 22) If we remember passive nihilism and Nietzsche’s warn about how it is spread to Europe, the slave morality that is driven by resentment and ordains values accordingly, this absence of a triumphant affirmation of itself in slave morality means that it is abstained from creative action. In other words, the passive nihilist attitude of the

slave morality cannot build new things since its motivation of revenge is only about a constant refusal and rejection of another, not even an affirmation of itself.

Acquiring knowledge by experiencing something is disregarded in slave moralities, the theoretical knowledge that is schooled or evangelized is praised. The motive of revenge is performed through the means of morality, but that motive detains them from creative action. *Forgetfulness* is not a feature of slaves but of masters, so they can to an extent free themselves, but slaves embrace *the technique of remembering things* in order to solidify their *ressentiment* to their masters. (Nietzsche 2008, 42) This retrospective effort prevails over a prospective effort that will pave the way for creating new values and for creative action.

### **3.1.2. Will to Power**

As a follow up to Nietzsche's criticism to Socratic tradition and aesthetics, how idea of individuation is introduced, knowledge is accepted as virtue and intelligibility as beauty, Nietzsche criticizes modern philosophy that is in the search for the Truth, drives from human reason. Because, the elevation of epistemology with a focus on human reason regardless of human desires, instincts, motives, and will is problematic for him. He also criticizes the search for the Truth that can be observed since Plato. For Nietzsche, there is no transcendent truth. There is no absolute truth that is behind what is observed, experienced, and reasoned. Consequently, there is no necessary and universal transcendent truth. Simply, for him, there is no Truth. The slave hides his truth from himself. But most importantly, the question is not just why humans want the Truth, but what is the *truth about the will to the Truth*? It is the modern philosophy itself that hides or ignores the truth about the *will to the Truth*, just like the slaves. And, this fact or truth about the will to Truth is *the will to power* for Nietzsche.

Ideals of asceticism; notions as ordeal, pity, modesty, and altruism; manners as equality, autonomous individualism, pragmatism/welfarism, communitarianism/socialism, and democracy incentivize mediocrity and kill or waste creativity and perfection. The ideal of a universal value or moral system works in the same way since what is good for a master cannot be good for slave or vice versa. That ideal, only works to ignore facts and

interplays as a harvest of will to power which is the only valid truth. Ones who think that they cannot live in a life where there is lie, are the ones who will to the Truth. Hence, while criticizing the conformity to the conventional understanding, Nietzsche introduces the *will to power* in the essence of every relations.

“...all aims, all uses are merely signs indicating that a *will to power* has mastered something less powerful than itself and impressed the meaning of a function upon it in accordance with its own interest.” (Nietzsche 2008, 58)

The truth about the will to Truth, the truth that slaves hides from themselves while appointing their weakness as a strength in the face of their masters with their invented fortune of revenge, truth about the distinction between good and bad conscience, is the *will to power*. However, it is important to note that here the will does not indicate a self-control or deterrence. And power does not indicate mere domination. Accordingly, the will to power is equal to the *instinct of freedom*. (Nietzsche 2008, 67) In any sort of event and human relations the instinct of freedom or the will to power asserts itself.

Having clarified the will to power as the essence of every relations, it is also important to clarify that Nietzsche disagrees with Kant’s theory of binary opposition suggesting that good cannot be derived from bad and bad cannot be derived from good. For him, what is understood as good or bad is about *interpretation*. There is no certain good or bad and they are not mutually exclusive categories. One can derive from another. Nietzsche does not eradicate truth and reality; he redefines them from within life since truth is not beyond or separate from this world. (Finnigan 2000, 1) Reality is not outside of our experience. Truths cannot be something that one captures, secures, and defines. “Rather it is a stake one continuously makes and affirms from within the context of one’s life.” (Finnigan 2000, 10) Therefore, it is dynamic, not static as put in the modern philosophy. It cannot be something forced on world from outside or above the world, rather it is subjectively identified and interpreted according to the life. It is also not possible to evaluate world as object, because the self is not free from the world. Our perspective changes the way we see the truth; the human condition and the context of life change the reality. Since “perspective (is) the basic condition of all life”. (Nietzsche 2008, 6)

Modern science is driven by the notion of progress and this has been accompanied with a teleological understanding: understanding of a linear history, assumption of immanent

and permanent development; all by the virtue of the Enlightenment's ideal rational man. But, according to Nietzsche, 'development' of a custom, a thing or an organ does not mean a progress towards an ultimate goal. (Nietzsche 2008, 58) There is no beyond that is outside of or greater than human life "that furnishes meaning, direction, design, and purpose." (Finnigan 2000, 8) Nietzsche is one of the critics of progressive understanding of history, positivism, and Social-Darwinism. Because, changes that are results of the will to power, do not happen in a strict fashion. Maybe most importantly, for Nietzsche, "world becomes but does not become to something". (Finnigan 2000, 8) World and life are meant for change; as Heraclitus would have argued, change is the only permanent thing. But this change is not driven by a telos of life, world or nature.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche notes that even though science positioned itself as anti-Christian, it is not anti-religious. Because, from Plato to positivists the commonality is that they are seeking for the absolute truth. The teleological understanding of science and history is the search for what is beyond, named sometimes as progress and sometimes as the universal values and as ends in themselves. Notions derived such as 'scientific method', 'objectivity', 'pure, will-free knowledge' which "only usually decked-out skepticism" are presented as the paralysis of the will. (2008, 100) The skepticism towards everything, nihilism characterizing Europe are the result of the Enlightenment. "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him." (Nietzsche 1974, 181) All values derived from God are also dead now; the Enlightenment killed the belief in God and if it ever existed. However, it did not replace it with new values. "The deserts grow: Woe him who harbors to deserts!" (Nietzsche 2006, 248) The desert where nothing can be built on it; the desert of passive nihilism where no new values can grow. Nihilism manifest itself "since the establishment of Truth, beyond life, upon nothingness." (Finnigan 2000, 8)

Idealism, all philosophies and ideologies, Christianity, and science "organized life around the ideal of the beyond have done so at the cost of denying life and alienating humanity from natural instincts and drives." (Finnigan 2000, 6) While religion by the call of asceticism and not looking for happiness in this world prevents the reproduction of life and paralyzed the will by ordeal, science paralyzed the will in the search for the progress and planting sole reason for any sort of explanation. As for philosophy, living like a philosopher and living wisely are lauded. Wisdom is considered as an ability to escape from a wicked game with a nice epilogue. However, for Nietzsche, true philosophers do

not escape from a risky situation but play the wicked game because they have the courage to experience things and imagine extraordinary situations. So, for Nietzsche, the paralysis of the will, the belief or search for the beyond resulted with undervaluing what is to value and valuing what is to undervalue; with no creative action. It caused human to be ashamed of his/her natural motives and incarcerate them. Most importantly, this has led to the negation of life and it precluded *revaluation of all values* from within life. “The task itself calls for something else—it calls for him to create values.” (Nietzsche 2008, 105) For him, *true philosophers* create their own values without being attached to the conventional norms and values. He describes them *as commanders and lawgivers*, because “their knowing is *creating*, their creating is law-giving, their will to truth is *–the will to power.*” (Nietzsche 2008, 105)

Having the criticisms, fundamentally pointed the negation of life, what is to be affirmed for Nietzsche? It is the life. Also, the will to power as the truth behind our actions. Nietzsche emphasizes the role of desires and instincts alongside of reason. Imagine fear, desire, passion, drives, instincts, and emotions as an elephant; and reason as a monkey on top of the elephant. (Frost 2012) The monkey thinks that he drives and controls the elephant, however in fact, it is the elephant that arrives. Monkey assumes that it drove the elephant to the point, but it is actually an elephant which would not that much listen the monkey. Thus, human action is motivated through fear or desire alongside of reason. “Thinking is not simply comprised of reason, but is an aggregate of instincts, drives, passions, emotions, will---and reason.” (Finnigan 2000, 4) As it was symbolized in the form of *satyr*; half human, half animal; a coexistence of human reason and animalistic features. Remember how Apollo and Dionysus were complementary to each other in tragedies to reflect human life and condition. The rational, self-controlling, and form-based motives of the Apollonian cult; and the passion, ecstasy, and self-annihilation motives of the Dionysian cult composed stories of a man.

### **3.1.3. Free Spirits**

From Socrates to the modern philosophers, reason is considered as the means to seek for the Truth while other features, the elephant, especially what is natural is disregarded. The truth about will to Truth is covered. Still modern science, ideologies and all assume that

the monkey drives the course history. This has resulted in degeneration of man, the undervaluation of the truth about the humans, their instincts for freedom, so their will to power. But, for Nietzsche, “old truth is coming to an end.” (Nietzsche 2007, 80) The time is coming for *free* spirits and *true* philosophers who will recognize and accept their will to power, the instincts that drives them, they will re-evaluate all values freeing from the conventional norms that slave moralities and mass mediocrity have put. They will be able to take creative action which is possible by the recognition of the truth about the will to power and by an effort for re-evaluation to pave the way for change; changes that will never be permanent but re-founded from within life. Honesty will be the only virtue; they will detain from convincing themselves through lying; and knowledge or wisdom that is not gained by experience and even precluded the chance to meet with something new will no longer be the virtue.

“Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowing. That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of “world history”, but nevertheless, it was only a minute.” (Nietzsche 2012, 114)

The ideal of rational man drew philosophy where it undermines the natural aspects of being human and the very essence of its relations. The ideal of rational man glorified *knowing* over anything and attributed it a certain form of power that yields on the denial of the rest of the features. *Knowing* is presumed to be the whip of history in order to order it. As for the social construction of morals and plenty of whit building it up. A whit is a concept which “arises from equation of unequal things.” (Nietzsche 2012, 117) Because a leaf is never totally equal to another but still called leaf regardless of its individual differences; it is an abstraction, it is the ability that distinguishes man from animal, the “ability to volatilize perceptual metaphors in schema and thus dissolve and image into a concept.” (Nietzsche 2012, 118) The new world made its own prison of its own products, the concepts which are ephemeron. (Nietzsche 2012, 121)

An obstinate use of this kind of abstraction and even pursuing knowing through such abstractions is problematic for Nietzsche. Because there is not much to praise the seek for the truth while using this method of abstraction. As he argues that this effort is similar to trying to find something that you have already placed behind of something another.

The praise of reason would conclude with an equation of unequal things to a level that it is beyond a simple abstraction. A single point in a truth cannot be ““true in itself” or really and universally apart from man” and man cannot be treated as “the measure of all things” (Nietzsche 2012, 119) Because, as told before, truth is about perspective and interpretation. Here, Nietzsche also emphasizes *forgetting* which is the only way that a man himself can be an *artistically creating subject*; which will also provide repose, security, and consistency. (Nietzsche 2012, 119)

In the very beginning of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche presents three metamorphoses of the spirit. In a way, he describes three stages of human condition in the route to overcoming the passive nihilism and ascending towards what he calls *Übermensch*. Till that day, for him, the first two stages have already been experienced, but experience of the last stage is to come in the future as he foresees. At first, human is like a camel who have burdened with lots more than it is capable of carrying on its shoulders and consequently collapsed to the ground. The burden is the values that has been oriented him to ordeal, to lean on only reason to seek for a transcended truth, to seek for knowledge as virtue, to search for equalization of unequal things etc. As the burden hastened him into a wilderness, his spirit is also hastened into his wilderness. (Nietzsche 2006, 16) It has left him alone in his own wilderness, this caused him to ascend toward the second stage where he becomes a lion. A lion that roars to its surroundings and is lifted from its burden by rejecting to carry them. He says no to all and rejects every truth. It is the stage where Europe is at, for Nietzsche. It is the stage of passive nihilism. He is the one who have killed the last God and abolished all values and truths left from it. Even though lion cannot replace the old values with new values, it is the necessary stage for human to become free. In order to yield new values, one must free him/herself from the old ones. But who can create its own values, if not a powerful and preying lion? It is the child. In the very last stage, which is meant to overcome the previous stage of nihilism, is for man to become a child. Because a child is innocent; who can forget and does not hesitate to begin something new. Also, a child who plays on the sand, builds a castle and can destroy it afterwards. Child plays the game of creating, says a holy “yes” which is the will on his/her own will. Therefore, when a man is at the stage of child, he can continuously re-evaluate his own values. He can annihilate himself, as would the Dionysian cult suggest, exceed himself and cancel the paralysis of the will as in the Apollonian cult. If a man reaches to

the last stage, he would no longer be ashamed of its will or power, he would no longer praise the ideals of ordeal, and most importantly he could *affirm life*.

The notion of *Übermensch* comes from this understanding of life affirmation. For him, human must be overcome and “one must come one day.” (Nietzsche 2008, 76) *Übermensch* is someone who can create his/her own values without hesitating, show courage to struggle the popular values, does not need approval for his own values, and who is not scared of saying that s/he is defeated. That is why “what does not kill him makes him stronger” (Nietzsche 2007, 9). *Übermensch* is not created of values but s/he creates her/his own values. *Übermensch* is the master of his/her own values by showing the courage to be him/herself, not adopting values because others would want him/her to have so or would approve. In this regard, being oneself is not being alike with others by the use of the reason, as is the case for Kant. “The greatest person should be the one who can be most lonely, most hidden, most deviant, the man beyond good and evil, the master of his virtues, abundantly rich in will. This is what greatness should mean: the ability to be both multifarious and whole, both wide and full.” (Nietzsche, 2008, 107)

Hence, Nietzsche, alongside of his criticisms to modern religions, moral understandings, politics, and philosophy, manifests and also claims something new: life affirmation with the recognition of will to power. He kind of heralds the free spirits, true philosophers and *Übermensch* of future who will revalue their values, affirm life and live without saying ‘I wish I had...’. To illustrate this way of living, Nietzsche uses the notion of *eternal recurrence*. Assume that your life, your existence will recur in an infinite cycle. You will live the very life that you have lived again and again. The choices that you made once will repeat across time and space eternally. Would you affirm your life? Or would you be trapped at the first or the second stage of spirit? Would you want to go on carrying the burden or on rejecting everything without creating new values for yourself? Life affirmation is not about tolerating life but about loving it just because it is life. Free spirits saturate everything in their life good or bad since life affirmation is not about ignoring the truth about will to power and rationalization of the motives. In this regard, it is important to read his emphasis on *forgetfulness* with his manifestation of *life affirmation*. Forgetfulness cannot be read as it is equal to indifference. Rather, it is a part of the process where one wills to create its own values and to affirm its life. A straight forgetting the pain that is caused by another on you or tolerating it is not suggested. But it is suggested

that considering how life and our actions changing it are one time matters, it is necessary to detain from lies and from the feeling of revenge that indispensably makes you obsessive about the past, in order to be able to begin something new, to create your own values, to get you stronger, and to affirm your life. These emphases on life affirmation and eternal recurrence are also related how Nietzsche attach importance to perfectionism. As noted before, the Greek notion of *arate* is not a virtue but *excellence* in doing something. Hence, Nietzsche draws attention to the excellence in living by suggesting the spirit of a child.

As God, masters are also gone. The will to revenge under the name of justice has ordained the moral values and spread over the Europe. Accordingly, “the “masters” are done away with; the morality of the common man has won.” (Nietzsche 2008, 21) Because, as he notes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, democratic movement is the heir of Christianity since it also promotes the slave morality. Also, democracy is not so different from the previous forms of governance; its only difference is the *overall degeneration of man*. Because, the demand for equal rights on the basis of revenge is not of creating values and acting in a creative way, but for degrading itself to a herd instinct that follows the established rules and norms without making any effort to create its own. The hierarchy of values introduced by the slave morality that is of mass mediocrity imposed the denial of life. Binary oppositions are built almost in every aspect of life, as if every relations work through the mutually exclusive categories of good and bad. It has stabilized human minds and stood in the way of creating new values and affirming life, while depending on the rise of nihilism. On the one hand, democracy has become a means for mass mediocre who convince themselves by lying in order to pursue their invented fortune of getting revenge against masters or aristocracy.

“I use the word ‘state’: it goes without saying what I mean by that--some horde or other of blond predatory animals, a race of conquerors and masters which, itself organize others, unhesitatingly lays its fearful paws on a population which may be hugely superior in numerical terms but remains shapeless and nomadic. Such is the beginning of the ‘state’ on earth: I think that the sentimental effusion which suggested that it originates in a ‘contract’ has been done away with. He who is capable of giving commands, who is a ‘master’ by nature, who behaves violently in deed and gesture what are contracts to him!” (Nietzsche 2008, 66)

On the other hand, he also points out the characteristic of states while challenging the social contract theory. State is not something of the true will of the people; its fundamental characteristic is its exercise of violence and contracts are not really binding for those who rule. So, the social contract theory is done away with, even though democratic approach presumes that it exists.

### **3. 2. The Politics of Victimhood in the Light of Nietzsche's Theoretical Framework**

As might be expected, Friedrich Nietzsche would see today's competitive victimhood as an expansion of slave morality. The culture it reproduces would be seen as the culture that mediocre mass would feature it as a matter of revenge and a matter of their passive nihilistic attitude that bring saying 'no' into the center of almost every issue. He would also point out how utilitarian standpoint lies in the heart of competitive victimhood and how its narration bases on lies that are for convincing victims themselves rather than projecting on their future. In order to generate some criticisms by Nietzschean approach on today's politics of victimhood, in this section, firstly I will try to provide a criticism on the politics of victimhood, also by bringing out the similarities between Nietzschean reading and problematizations in the second chapter; and secondly, I will try to designate a set of propositions that Nietzsche might have pointed out in order to overcome the problem of agency in the politics of victimhood and its culture.

As noted before, the morality of slaves dates back to the Socratic tradition which had distorted the Apollonian cult by necessitating torment in order to achieve or know one's self in the idea of individuation. The theoretical ideal man is praised through its virtue of knowledge and its recognition of intelligibility as beauty, while the motives of the Dionysian cult in which refrainment, self-control, and even the self are annihilated, were left out. The death of the tragedy when the chorus was introduced as an ideal spectator and as a means to preach rationality and morality to create public opinion was a clear example of how the theoretical ideal man who is 'freed' from its natural and animalistic features is presented to the people who are now more of a spectator for internalization. These have constituted basis of the conventional understandings along with the notions

of guilt and ordeal where good and bad conscience are taken into a dualistic relationship where the creditor could become the bad one. The conformity to the conventional understanding has neglected the truth about the essence of every relations and the truth about the will to truth to carve out the theoretical ideal man which is *will to power*. Also, the conformity to the conventional understanding has brought plenty of ideologies which also constituted on the basis of this indifference because it would be contrary to the motives of these ideologies. The motive of equality which usually act as a hollow effort to equalize unequal things and universalisms on the basis of the theoretical ideal man reveal the conventional bases of the modern ideologies.

If we remember Furedi's (2017) historical analysis of the identity politics, he was arguing that nationalism then socialism arose with a dissonance with the rising idea of universalism since the Enlightenment. However, Nietzsche's criticism on these ideologies is based on their conformity to the conventional understanding in regard to the ideal of equality and their causes on the basis of revenge. Also, it is possible to assert that even though they have reacted as universalistic reductionism, they did not stand against the idea of the theoretical ideal man that is surrounded with the virtue of knowledge and purged from its natural instincts; the satyr was forgotten by all. Ideologies manifest a state of selflessness in a community, party, or group that they belong. They soar on a morality that is of a crowd not of independent individuals. This selflessness shows itself in the objectives of moral duty for the people, whereas a moral duty is not a motive of action for a noble man. Therefore, unlike master morality, slave morality that is persisting in modern ideologies incentivizes behaviors coming from *herd instinct*. People of the ideologies are evaluated according to their loyalty or consciousness. While those members would be considered as 'good', others would be considered as 'bad'. Good members are the harmless ones to the cause and the people around that cause. In this sense, there lies the utilitarian understanding, as Nietzsche noted for slave moralities. A potential harm is associated with what comes from a bad conscience and as Dougherty (2018) have argued suffering is accepted as the only form that is to measure happiness or what is good or evil. Therefore, even though the modern ideologies are, or they born as anti-universalistic they share a very important element: the idea of the theoretical ideal man. The ideal spectator who is preached and taught within the boundaries of morality is also the one who is taught of the horizons of its identity and is distinguished from others because of being *persona grata*. 'True' members of that group are designated or assigned

according to their fulfilment of duty, loyalty, and degree of knowledge. This also means that there is a certain set of truths or even the truth that they should be knowing of. Every ideology asserts a certain truth and knowing it becomes the very virtue for the true members of that ideological group. Knowing about the designated cause or goal becomes the very basis for dualistic readings of social relations. The 'they' -other nations, ruling elite, other groups- is demonized while 'we' is praised. They reinforce the skepticism towards everything and blaming all man while problematizing the human condition; this would ultimately mean a nihilistic attitude that is making no new values but only destructing the old ones. Furthermore, ideologies are driven by a teleological understanding; they assume a regularity in the course of social relations that will lead to a certain stage, they share the modern understanding of linear history and legitimize their cause through a telos. This telos is presented with a legitimate cause that will end the weakness of a group. The truth in the cause will yield the victory which is the actualization of telos. However, their will to truth is not seen as the will to power in the beginning, to the contrary the weakness is presented as a strength which is presumed through a glance to the ones who has strength (the master). The appointment of the weakness helped to invent a fortune for the identity groups and their ideologies.

Similar to these ideologies, especially of communitarianism, nationalism and socialism, the identity politics of today that is converged with victimhood can be read as if it is based on the conventional understanding since it produces a judgement over good and bad conscience, contends for equality, maybe most importantly, glosses over the fact of pathos of distance and it reinforces a revengeful attitude. Considering how competitive victimhood is criticized because there is an ever-increasing contestation for the status of victim and debates on 'the real victim' in politics, it is safe to assert that Nietzsche would argue that being victim as a virtue signals a fundamental motive of the slave morality. An identity politics converged with the victimhood incentivizes people to think their political agency through a corporate persona that is of all people who have suffered from the same cause. Therefore, while attributing an agency to the people it also imposes a state of selflessness in which individual differences fuses in the communal claims and narrative. In parallel to Bickley's (2016) emphasis on the importance to distinguish what is victimhood and the politics of victimhood, and how the politics of victimhood turns into a promotion of the victimhood culture, and by doing so treat the victims as an aggrieved mess, the identity politics converged with victimhood reinforces selflessness and

reduction of victims' experiences into a singular truth. The truth about the injustices and the cause of suffering becomes the objective to be revealed in the public, even though truth may differ in individual experience, they are presented within a grand narrative that is supposed to cover for all stories. Therefore, there is not much of a place left for individual experiences, narrations, and interpretations. Remember that how Nietzsche saw life as all about interpretation. Objectivization of the victimhood in today's identity politics is similar to how modern ideologies gather people under the roof of a corporate persona. In this regard, being victim or being a part of the victimized group works in a way that it promotes a selflessness to an extent that one's individual perspective becomes to fuse in the crowd. It also works with the notion of duty if we remember how Karpam's drama triangle works. The victim's assignment of others in the categories of persecutor and rescuer imply a necessity for judgement on the persecutor and a duty for the rescuer and also victim's him/herself to do that. The confrontation with the unjust past and recovery for those who were and have been victimized become a duty for all to do, especially for those who are part of the identity group. It is also similar to the modern ideologies in terms of its teleological understanding in regard to the objectives of representative democracy where today the representation of some is assumed to nourish representation for all in time. However, remember that world does not have an intrinsic objective to become, even though it becomes continuously. Change is beyond a necessity, it is almost a rule for the world, but the assumption that changes orienting world to a single objective is nonsense for Nietzsche. Therefore, the democratic telos cannot guarantee a stage in the history that is for the victims overcome their victimhood.

The notion of guilt is attributed to the persecutors or arbiters and the ones who do not share the responsibility and simply ignore the injustices. Therefore, who is guilty is about who has a bad conscience. The ideological ground that is built on the common identity is presented as the manifestation of the good conscience against the wrongs caused by the bad conscience. Attaching importance to pity, help, and kindness in ideologies works as utilitarian goals, since what is good is associated with what is harmless. Even though this simplistic distinction between good and bad conscience is an indicator of the will to power, the actors of the politics of victimhood tend to ignore. The weakness of the victimized groups is formulized as a strength in the face of the persecutor and the power. However, as slaves' glance through the masters invent their fortune, in the politics of victimhood the association of the weakness with strength is an effort to invent a fortune

in which the persecutors no longer be in the privileged position in society. The glance through the other who is held responsible leads to objectivization of that other either the masters or the persecutors and delinquent or unsuccessful saviors. The objectivization helps the victims to construct their own group identity, however as slave morality does not generate self-affirmation but a constant refusal and rejection of the morality of the masters, in the end victims are lacking in a self-affirmative perspective.

As Manning and Campell (2018) pointed out, different from honor cultures, victimhood culture is not about the way you behave but someone else's treatment of you, therefore the victimhood culture produces a self-perception that is comprised of an externality. In line with their analysis, Nietzsche's criticism on slave morality about how it grows from the outset of an 'outside', an 'other', and a 'non-self' is crucial at this point. Because the absence of a glorious self-affirmation and reverence on one's will to power in slave morality is a complementary to the covering up the truth about will to power in the victim politics and presentation of weakness as a strength. As slaves do, they convince themselves through lying about the very motive in their action and the reproduction of the victimhood culture. In this sense, it is not about the sincerity of their cause and the extent of the injustices that they face but about how they position themselves within life. The appointment of their weakness as a strength display an imitation of the strength of the persecutor even though it is not by the same means. The morality is employed as a form of power in order to degrade the privileged position of the persecutors, even though this is not always problematic it becomes when the position of the victims is praised through a simplistic distinction between good and bad conscience in the meantime. Here we need to remember that Nietzsche did not argue for not helping who is in need or harmed by another, he argued the way in which this help is framed. Accordingly, the politics of victimhood that is aiming for a confrontation with the heavy past and restitution for the wrongs done, will be an extension of the slave morality as long as the help is legitimized because of pity. Because, this is not a creative action that will generate new forms of relationships but only of a way of deeming one's self to a higher moral status. Also, because help can be provided where there is an excess of power. Therefore, this is the common criticism made on the politics of victimhood that Nietzsche would also agree on: The more competitive it gets, the more it is unable to generate new solutions and values.

The politics of victimhood that is accompanied by a moral culture it produces, invents its ideal man as persona grata that is only a victim of the society. The moral higher ground of being victim reinforces people who are victimized in a sense that they recognize themselves only as victims and always in difference of interest with others. This moral culture precludes the possibility to discover one's self apart from the matter of victimhood. As Furedi (2017) noted that a social distinction on the basis of victimhood results with blaming ruling elite for all injustices. This may result with perceiving the victims only as innocent ones and not responsible for anything that is persisting or newly occurring in the social relations or the system. It reinforces the passive nihilist attitude about the human condition which lead no creative action but skepticism about all manners of life and human relations. Hence, the politics of victimhood that is becoming more and more competitive in regard to its political leverage, and the moral culture that produces are away from self and life affirmation. Other than that, it overwhelmingly necessitates the employment of the technique of remembering things rather than projection future with new values. Forgetfulness as a feature of the noble morality is absent in the competitive victimhood which would leave a space to re-evaluate the old values and contemplate on the new ones. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that the politics of victimhood requires remembrance as a must to issue victimhood and seek for solutions.

Therefore, Nietzsche would argue that the politics of victimhood that is shaped in a competitive sense is an extension of slave morality; and as for Judeo-Christian and liberal ethics, modern ideologies and sciences, it is indifferent about the essence of every social relations, which is the will to power. The virtue of knowing shows itself in the competition for victimhood where the real victim is contested by many and become a matter of political debate. On the one hand, if knowing the truth about the source of injustice that lays in social relations and lead to victimhood of an identity group is prioritized on a moral ground (that is objectivizing and degrading the other), and if it is privatized for that identity group, it causes a social polarization that is intensified by a dualistic understanding of good and evil. The understanding that the truth can be spoken only by the victim is a part of the superior virtue of the oppressed. (Bartlett 2015) Polarization becomes inevitable if no good is expected of presumed persecutors and good is only associated with the status of victim. As the designated truth about the social relations that cause injustices, what is understood from good will become static rather than a dynamic matter that will be re-evaluated in the changing conditions of life and

perspective. A social platform where interpretation and criticisms may flourish will be narrowed since only speaking of a static truth will be found morally worthy of.

On the other hand, the victimhood discourses by nature are based on the truth that was covered by the powerful. The search for truth means confrontation with it and its consequences in order to change its effects and recover what has done. The politics of victimhood in this sense inevitably employs the technique of remembering things which is associated with slave morality by Nietzsche. However, if the utility of a certain truth is considered as higher than speaking of a counter-perspective or the utility of retrospective thinking is considered as higher than thinking prospectively, the possibility of revaluation of values and life affirmation that may actually lead creative action will be undermined. Thus, if the group identity works as a constant reminder of the past and preach vengeance then it prevents one to forget and begin something new. Group identity converged with the victimhood may be the very peak point of this equalization of unequal things. In this sense, Nietzsche might have agreed with Sykes (1992) about how the victim has become the symbol of the modern society. An abstraction based on a victimhood that arose from a similar ground of injustice and an abstraction of narrative in accordance to the designated wrongs done will swallow the individual differences in terms of experience. If we remember Nietzsche's emphasis on how identification of a virtue was considered as an obstacle in front of experience, an attribution of virtue to the status of victim will undermine the way for experience and interpretation. Individual experience is the only way to create values of own for an individual. Therefore, the politics of victimhood that is producing an ethos and a virtuous or ideal status of victim in the aim of contesting power will stand in the way of victims to create their own values through their own experiences. Eventually, this will perpetuate the degeneration of all man, the desert will continue to grow since an identity politics converged with victimhood is incorporated to the passive nihilist worldview, and honesty as the closest notion to a virtue will be lost at the stakes of today's competitive victimhood.

At the final of these criticisms generated under the Nietzschean perspective, what would be an alternative way that is concerned with victimhood? Nietzsche describes forgetfulness as a feature of noble man who revere the power of himself and over himself, and he accounts it as a possibility for prospective thinking, whereas the technique of remembering things in slave morality confines us to retrospective thinking that will feed

ressentiment and negation. As noted before, forgetfulness does not mean indifference of our realities or tolerating life. Remember the famous quote: “what does not kill him makes him stronger.” (Nietzsche 2007, 9) Pain or harm caused by either someone or one’s self, is a matter of experience that will always come with a possibility to change in life, if you are courageous to conduct your own interpretation, behavior, and values in the aftermath. Remember the three stages of a spirit’s metamorphoses; becoming a lion when the camel can no longer carry the weight of all values that are attached to very life we are in, when the wilderness of life leaves the camel’s spirit into its own wilderness and the lion raises in that solitude; even though lion is lifted and released from its burden, the desert is not a place for construction and finally the child spirit may born to create its own value in a continuous effort that consists wrecking and rebuilding the castles from sand. Nietzsche would not argue that victims should connive at the injustices that they face; they will eventually become a lion after being a camel such burdened, but they cannot remain as lion since change and creation of new values cannot be possible on a desert and by always a negative attitude.

If a morality or a culture is organized around the issue of victimhood that is against of the ‘other’, then the degeneration of all men will continue because of the absence of a creative action and the ignorance about the will to power. Therefore, ascending to the spirit of a child who is innocent because s/he is forgetful and courageous to start new games is necessary. We may presume in Nietzschean approach that a person who is victimized or the ones who argue for them by the excess of their power rather than out of a pity, should be able to say ‘yes’ to create new values and solutions that are beyond good and evil while recognizing their will to power since it is the very instinct for freedom. Honesty and courage should be the only notions that are close to a virtue; and any other virtue should be regarded as an obstacle in front of the individual experience and as a tie to a morality that reproduces mediocrity by imposing selflessness. By doing so, anyone may seek excellence in doing something as a result of life-affirming attitude that will be nurtured by keeping the metaphor of eternal recurrence in mind. In this sense, Nietzschean perspective present us a solution that only starts at the individual level rather than at the group or social level. If one revere its will to power and of another, then s/he will not seek revenge that is manifested through a social telos. S/he may become in life, experience and stimulate changes. But as the world, s/he does not become something.

Beside of the fact that Nietzsche's philosophy presents a personal solution, it is possible to argue that he would not see representative democracy as a solution, based on his criticism on contractarianism and democracy. The social contract theory presumes that a social contract is the basis for social and legal norms; consequentially, for a state. However, Nietzsche argues that a state rules on its population as a master and behaves violently in all terms, thus, contracts are not binding to him so contracts would have led its formation. Therefore, state is not made of the true will of the people and the social contract theory is done away with, even though it is assumed that it exists. This assumption is persisted by the notion of democracy, because it is a means for mass mediocre who convince themselves by lying about their strength to be able to pursue revenge in their invented fortune.

#### **4. HANNAH ARENDT: POLITICAL ACTION, SPEECH, AND IDENTITY**

Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) is one of the leading political thinkers who suggests a new way of understanding politics, perhaps a post-modern one even though she does not use this phrase, in the face of existing perception of political power on the basis of violence. As a child of German-Jewish family, she was forced to leave her homeland, Germany; after she spent eight years in Paris working for Jewish refugees, she immigrated to the United States in 1941. (D'Entreves 2019) Her academic profession in the United States have heavily influenced today's Political Theory literature. From a very similar starting point to Nietzsche's, she criticized the progressive politics that has been constituted with the effects of the Enlightenment and universalism. These phenomena have been especially questioned in the late twentieth and twenty first century after the Second World War and Holocaust. However, she did not confine herself to a mere criticism, but she tried to move beyond. As Canovan (1998) notes, Arendt finds an Archimedean point of view in Ancient Greece about the ways we think and behave; and even the assumption that we may learn lessons from those ages itself challenges the modern belief in progress. To Arendt, beginning with Plato, all political theorists have missed and ignored the fundamental condition of politics that "it goes on among *plural* human beings, each of whom can act and start something new." (Canovan 1998) For this reason, she intends to "a reconsideration of the human condition from the vantage point of our newest experiences and most recent fears." (Arendt 1958, 5) She explores the human capacities that are coming from the human condition, in order to query for ways in which human beings may still discover identity and find meaning. Unless the human condition is changed, the human capacities are permanent and cannot be irreversibly lost. (Arendt 1958, 6) Since the human condition is plurality and plurality is an imperative of sharing the world and being-with, the capacities are permanently at hand unless we lose the very quintessence of the human condition: that is the earth.

Beside of her critical analysis of totalitarianism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, she began a new theoretical framework by examining the fundamental categories of *vita activa* (*labor, work, action*) phenomenologically in *The Human Condition*. She underlined the importance of *praxis* in politics by re-examining its origins in the Aristotelian political theory, since it has been ignored by the modern political philosophy. She drew attention to the elevation of *vita contemplativa* over *vita active*; and examined the faculties of *vita contemplativa* (*thinking, willing, judging*). Villa (2007) argues that after Nietzsche denounced the death of God, Arendt is the first political theorist who has thought on the quality of political act. Although she deconstructs metaphysics and criticizes the Western Political Thought, she is not a deconstructionist who tries to bring down the cognitive thinking. She also differs from Platonist political rationalism which tallies up experience with idea. (Berkday 2012, 18) In that regard, she brought a new approach to connect *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*. And, her approach with regard to her criticisms on the overcome of the *vita contemplativa*, tells us that theory is valid to the extent that it is contingent upon the reality.

She intentionally defined herself as a political thinker, not a philosopher. Although she criticized representative democracy, she argued for radical democracy that necessitates bottom-up movement and the rule of law. Although she teased out the matters that have left almost no means for questions concerning meaning, value, and identity, she investigated the ways that might still be available to question such manners by following a new path. Her main concern about the modernity was *the loss of the world*, alienation from the earth that came with the idea that we could lead a life without it since our relationships with others and the world are shaped by economic interests. The advent of automation has led a ‘society of laborers’ that we continue to perceive ourselves. These reinforced the elimination of public sphere and consequently thoughtlessness as the outstanding characteristic of the world. She put emphasis on how what is *social* has risen instead of what is public and political in ‘the modern age’ (from seventeenth century to twentieth century) which is different from the modern world (born with first atomic explosions). (Arendt 1958, 6) She reveals the contradictory understandings grow out of totalitarianism, as one of the final points that the modern age had reached and as a nihilist process: on the one hand, the motto of “everything is possible”; on the other hand, human beings as animal species that can be governed by laws of nature or history and are

dispensable. (Canovan 1958) Her concerns about modernity shaped through her own experiences in the first half of the twentieth century. In this regard, her works are reminders of the indispensability of ‘lived experience’ in respect to critical thinking. (Berkday 2012, 18) She wrote on freedom, tradition, authority (*Between Past and Future* 1961) and revolution (*On Revolution* 1963) as the primal notions of modernity; and she undertook the separation of morality from politics.

She does not consider politics as a mere means for individual betterment; she also does not theorize it as “a way to integrate individuals around a shared conception of the good.” (D’Entreves 1994, 2) Her understanding of politics that is only possible through an action emerged in the public sphere by deliberation about collective concerns, does not necessitate an agreement on what is good, to the contrary “it enables each citizen to exercise his or her powers of agency, to develop the capacities for judgment and to attain by concerted action some measure of political efficacy.” (D’Entreves 1994, 2) On the other hand, *identity* is also not about belonging to a group on the basis of a shared understanding of what is good. It is something *unique* since every human action brings new experience and as for action, identity is revealed in plurality where a political power may spring out. She builds an authentic understanding of politics in which she emphasizes contingency, imagination, participation and agency of an individual, differently from a reductionist approach on the basis of legal and institutional relations. (Berkday 2012, 12)

It is also important to keep in mind that she is heavily influenced from Heidegger and Karl Jaspers. It is possible to observe the impact of Heidegger’s philosophy especially in the use of the notions such as *understanding*, *tradition*, *being-in-the-world*, *worldliness*, *being-with...* In consideration to this influence, I will use such notions repeatedly to be more precise. By virtue of Heidegger’s effect about tradition becoming an obstacle in front of repetition that may lead a creative action, Arendt tries to discover the Greek experience of *polis* with the aim of looking at origins that is freed from tradition that has been affecting our way of understanding politics. On the other hand, Karl Jasper’s works has also influenced her examination of *judgement* with regard to the three categories of *guilt* (*criminal*, *political*, *metaphysical/moral*) in Jasper’s *On the Question of German Guilt*.

In this chapter, firstly, I will try to examine and explain the theoretical framework of Hannah Arendt. Secondly, by building on her theoretical framework, I will construe a reading and a criticism of today's politics of victimhood. Lastly, I will present an alternative way to think of victimhood in politics in Arendt's depiction of politics that is only possible through civic engagement and political deliberation in public sphere that will lead to political action and to overcome of the problem of agency.

#### **4.1. Arendt's Theoretical Framework**

In order to build on her characterization of power and understanding of politics, deriving from her theory of action, the order of human activities (*labor, work, action*) constituting *vita activa*; her assessment of *plurality, freedom, speech* and *identity* in relation to *action*; her categorization of the three ways of being (*animal laborans, homo faber, and zoon politikon*); the dissolution of the distinction between the *private* and *public space*; the *loss of the world*, rise of the *social* over against the *public* or *political*; elevation of *vita contemplativa* over *vita activa* and the fundamental categories of *vita contemplativa* (*thinking, willing, judging*); and *understanding* as central to her theorization of *political power* will be respectively explained in this section.

##### **4.1.1. Vita Activa**

There are three fundamental human activities that complete a human life and disclose a place for realization of human capacities. These are: labor, work, and action. These activities define the ways of our being-in-the-world and they constitute the order of *vita activa*. "The earth is the very quintessence of human condition" because it provides a unique habitat to us to live without needing artificial efforts. (Arendt 1958, 2) Labor is about our existence in this earth, sustaining our lives, surviving and it is considered by the supply of basic human needs such as reproduction and consumption. In this regard, labor is a common activity with animals for biological life. Therefore, it is related to the condition of life. Work, on the other hand, even though motivated by a similar instinct, is more about creating proper conditions to live and dwelling. The activity of work is

considered by construction of more permanent things in life. Such activity may produce things for human use that may even maintain itself longer than its producer's life. This also means that what is produced by work can be destroyed later. It is about the constructions of artificial object on earth. (Canovan 1998) Therefore, work is related to the human condition of *worldliness*. (Arendt 1958, 7) Action, as the last fundamental human activity, "is judged by its ability to disclose the identity of the agent, to affirm the reality of the world, and to actualize our capacity for freedom." (D'Entreves 1994, 65) Action is meaningless unless there is an attached "who" to it. Thus, it is related to the condition of plurality and conditioned by its presence. Plurality is the way humans be; for that matter, it is what gives the sense of freedom to human beings. "Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live." (Arendt 1958, 8) Although Arendt considers the three categories of human activities as for a complete human life and each are ways to discover human capacity in different senses and conditioned to different manners, action is the distinctive activity that differs human beings from animals and gods. The activity of labor is a common one with animals since their basic instincts are also survival and reproduction. On the other hand, the activity of contemplation is common with the gods at times.

Coming back to action that is conditioned with plurality and enables us to reach the sense of freedom, these features are not defined in the usual sense in Arendt's terminology. Freedom is not about a mere ability to prefer out of a set of options, it is not defined as a matter of choice as in the liberal tradition; it is also not something given by God. Rather, it is about beginning something new; is a capacity to initiate something that has not been initiated; it is something that all human beings are endowed with it by birth. Beginning something new means initiating to face an unexpected. There is always an unknown attached to an action. They are not only unpredictable but also irreversible. We cannot undo our action and we can never know what we have really done and its effects. That is why action is about courage, a courage to start something new.

It is also possible to find similar the effect of a birth of a human being with an action that works for the realization of freedom. As for action, something new and unexpected is actualized, the natality represents an introduction of something new to the world. Human

action is actualized as one of the unexpected among infinite number of unexpected, similar to a man's birth on earth as an unexpected. For Arendt, everyone is unique since they were born; the similarity of one to another is in respect the uniqueness as the common feature of humankind. While the virtue of being born or *natality* endows everyone with the human activity of action that is to begin something anew, it also brings a novelty to the world owing to the uniqueness of each and every one. "It is the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born." (Arendt 1958, 247) Work and labor as human activities ordering *vita activa* are also related to natality with regard to how they function in terms of sustaining and preserving life in a world that will continue to have newborns. Yet, action is more related to natality in respect to how "the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting". (Arendt 1958, 9) In this sense, action is a kind of re-enactment of "the miracle of beginning inherited in birth" as D'Entreves (1994, 67) expresses. An action of human beings reveals something that is not experienced, and it brings out what is unexpected and would not have happened if that action was not taken by the unique human being because of the "character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings..." (Arendt 1958, 177)

Although the sense of freedom is individual, it is conditioned with the presence of plurality in Arendt's definition. Therefore, freedom is not a matter that we search for all of a sudden in solitude, rather it becomes a matter by virtue of being-with. Freedom is the ground for politics to appear; it is not an appearance of will in political life. The public space brings the question 'who are you' rather than 'what somebody is', for this reason it enables us to discover who we are. (Arendt 1958, 178-179) Our actions are shaped with regard to others whom we dwell in the same sphere. In this regard, Arendt underlines the importance of public sphere in which we come across with others and the condition of plurality exists to lead action that will give the sense of freedom. Action is meaningless unless there is an attached 'who' to it. Definitions of a man that are put through answering 'what' are his qualities that "he could possibly share with other living beings" while answering 'who' he is corresponds to "his specific difference". (Arendt 1958, 181) Consequently, as plurality is a condition for action, it is also condition for freedom that is highly associated with one's disclosure of unique *identity*. Then, an action that is without *who* attached to it is meaningless and far from being an act of freedom. Here,

identity, as a personal matter in Arendt's definition, can be revealed in public sphere among others. An action that is attached with an identity -an answer can be given in plurality to the question of who you are since you are unique and have been a novelty to the world- is an action of freedom.

“Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality ... this plurality is specifically the condition — not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam* — of all political life.” (Arendt 1958, 7)

Arendt also does not approach pluralism in the usual sense. As the condition for action and for freedom that will come by an action, pluralism is “the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world.” (Arendt 1958, 7) The uniqueness of one's living is what is same among human being. In this sense, pluralism is about both *distinction* and *equality*. (D'Entreves 1994, 70) On the one hand, our life stories, experiences, and our perspective about the world is what makes us unique, therefore different from each other. On the other hand, we are similar in regard to the fundamental human activities (labor in relation to life, work in relation to worldliness, and action in relation to pluralism) that illustrate our capacities; to the activity of action in bringing something new to life; to the very fact of being unique; to be dwelling in the same world as the same species; but most importantly in regard to our ability to relate and understand each other. Here, *understanding* is an outcome of plurality. Plurality is what provides a ground for us to relate and act to others. The relationship between a two may be in infinite number of ways since they are distinctive from each other but similar in regard to their *understanding* each other by virtue of plurality. This relationship can be exercised without any intermediaries in the sphere of action through language. In this sense, *identity* is not something static, it has a dynamic characteristic in the web of human relations for Arendt; any essentialist characterization of identity is disregarded. Because, the semantic world of an individual may change; more precisely, it changes all the time with our experiences. Also, it is important to note that her emphasis on plurality is different from liberal pluralism. Because, while pluralism emphasizes the contrast between differentness, she emphasizes the distinctness of individuals and asserts that they cannot be reduced to each other.

“Every man as it were carries within himself a stage and an audience.” (Parekh 1981, 90) Imagination and understanding occur in the activity of thinking as if the agent is on a self-created mental stage as an actor, but also as a critical audience. Plurality in the sphere of appearances is a more tangible and practical realm to practice such an experience, because others are the critical audience and the agent is the actor who reveals his own identity. One cannot be critical of his own words and deeds all the time, for this reason, others are needed to enhance our *imagination* and *understanding*. To simply put, the source of *meaning* is others. (Berkday 2012, 66) In this sense, imagination provides a possibility for configuring a potential into an action that has never been thought or made before. It liberates thinking and allows a new ground to think of new norms and ideas since it is nourished from the plural stories about realities and perspectives about life and truths.

“Understanding is unending and therefore cannot produce final results” (Arendt 1994, 308) It begins with birth and ends with death. It is a continuous process in plurality that enhances our opinions. It has the characteristic to elude and break off the domination of a singular truth that is reproduced in the domains of life. In this regard, understanding others is associated with being guest to the minds of others in Berkday’s (2012) reading of Arendt, rather than generating a common concept of good or truth. “Understanding is itself an activity to resist indoctrination and mindless obedience...” (Fine 2001, 3) Action in plurality enables actors to meet the question of ‘who’ rather than ‘what’ and thereby reveal their identities; this also means an opportunity to understand one another free from any intermediaries, instructions, or manipulations. In the sphere of plurality, the only means that one relates and understands each other is: language.

Arendt accounts *lexis* or *speech* as the necessary condition for action or praxis. Because it is the way we communicate, how we express ourselves to others in order to take action. In this sense, it is possible to argue that action is primarily exercised as speech. However, it should not be understood as mere speaking, any ways of communicating, a symbolic effort to reach another by reflecting and telling about yourself is the condition for action in plurality. Speech is a way to disclose yourself by answering the question of ‘who are you’ in plurality, as for action. Speech and action are two complementary notions that derive the experience of freedom, understanding, and one’s realization of its identity. The web of relationships emerging in plurality out of a complex and infinite possibilities, can be exercised without intermediaries in the sphere of action through language because

plurality enables agents to disclose themselves and let others to disclose themselves, their identities to those too. This disclosure performed through action and speech is not one's mere action against or for another, but it reveals itself only in the state of being-with. "Men in the plural, that is, men in so far as they live and move and act in this world, can experience meaningfulness only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and to themselves." (Arendt 1958, 4) Therefore, meaning and identity that have been almost melted away in the modern age, could only be brought through action and speech that are not constituted alone but among plural human beings.

D'Entreves formulate the relationship between action and speech as: *Action entails speech* and conversely, *speech entails action*. (1994, 71) On the one hand, language enables us to specify and attach meaning to our actions, and it enables us to accord our actions among others. On the other hand, beyond the facts that speech is a form of action and actions are performed through speech, action becomes a means to evaluate the sincerity of the agent who speaks. For this reason, in a similar manner, speech is also meaningless without action, since action without speech would not be articulated with meaning and would be uncoordinated. The dynamic feature of action that is enabling actors to reflect on their identity is also valid for speech. "Words used for the purpose of fighting lose their quality of speech; they become clichés" (Arendt 1994, 308) As action is conditioned by plurality and is actualized without any intermediaries or interferences, speech in plurality as a primal condition of action is also free from any orientations that would only yield struggle between actors. "Revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are *with* others and neither for nor against them—that is, in sheer human togetherness." (Arendt 1958, 180) As an inherent part of action, speech is a way to bring something anew rather than repetition of conventional categories of thinking and assessment of ideas. It is a way to bring up one's unique experiences, being, and understanding. For this very reason: "for speech is what makes man a political being." (Arendt 1958, 3) In this regard, meaning and identity that can be disclosed through action and speech, belong to what is political.

#### **4.1.2. The Loss of the World**

Arendt outlines three categories of our ways of being according to the human activity that she has defined in the order of *vita activa*. The first category is *animal laborans* in which by the condition of the biological life the human activity of *labor* is at play. The second category is *homo faber* in which by the condition of worldliness the human activity of *work* is at play. Lastly, the third category is *zoon politikon* in which the human activity of *action* is at play. (Arendt 1958) As the activity of *labor* is common with animals in terms of biological life to reproduce and to consume, the categories of *homo faber* and *zoon politikon* are the categories that close human to be human. Everybody is an animal laborans. Everybody can be *homo faber*. As to repeat, permanency is not important for animal laborans since it consumes what it produces, but it is important for *homo faber*, because work is not consuming what is produced or what is available, rather it is to seek permanency and to enjoy from what it produces. Therefore, agents' possibility to disclose their identities in plurality is not possible as animal laborans or *homo faber*. Because, the individuality of the agent is bound to the constraints of the natural necessities for animal laborans; as it is a common feature among our species, we behave in a similar manner. Even though there are more space for individuality in the course of human activity of work, it requires a model to follow in order to produce and what is produced outlast the producer. Also, the end product does not tell much us about the producer, it cannot be a sphere for one to reveal him/herself because the end product only could answer the question of *what* about its producer rather than *who*. It could only tell us about the talents and abilities of the producer. (D'Entreves 1994, 72) In this regard, only as *zoon politikon*, agent's disclosure of itself can be possible by virtue of action and condition of plurality that are accompanied with speech.

“The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be.” (Arendt 1958, 198)

Hannah Arendt examines *polis* in Ancient Greece as a realm of plurality where speech and action could take place. She uses it as a metaphor rather than a mere analysis of social and political institutions. Also, it was not used for a specific realm but rather with regard to dwelling. Through this metaphor and the living quarters in Ancient Greece, Arendt points out the distinction between *private* and *public space*. Firstly, *Oikos* meant households and it was the space for necessities of life and economics. It was where

humans consume, and it was the *private space*. In private space, it is not possible to talk about freedom because it is a place of hierarchies. Therefore, humans cannot reveal their uniqueness and identity in the private space which is a kind of activity zone of animal laborans. Secondly, there was also the place named *agora* where craftsman produced and showed their products to others. In agora, the product precedes human or its producer and it is not a place of freedom since it is a kind of activity zone of homo faber. Therefore “whatever was "economic," related to the life of the individual and the survival of the species, was a non-political, household affair by definition.” (Arendt 1958, 29) The last realm in Ancient Greece is the *polls* where people gather and talk about the *polis*. Distinguishing from the household, polls was a place of equals, “whereas household was the center of strictest inequality.” (Arendt 1958, 32) Polis is a *space of appearance* where one can appear to another and vice versa. Polls is the place of *action* where people generate a common will to act and in which people can reveal themselves and their identity to one another. Therefore, it is the *political space* where freedom is possible by virtue of plurality. In the public/political space, the question of ‘what’ about the given identities is not to be asked, but the question of ‘who’ acts is asked in the way of disclosure of the unique identities of the agents. The freedom is being able to say something new among the people whom are different from you but similar in the sense that they are unique in terms of their biography and experiences as much as you. It is also important to note that polis is very fragile because the appearance is not only a matter of being there, whenever the human action disappears, what we political space would also disappear. In this regard, it is not a concrete space that will be maintained forever, rather it is a space that is a potential that can be actualized through action and also re-created by action. Polis is a place of potentiality for acting together.

However, in Arendt’s analysis, the human activity of action that gives the sense of freedom to human being is almost forgotten in the modern age due to the loss of the world. Arendt explains this situation through four main subjects: *World alienation*, *earth alienation*, the rise of the *social*, and the victory of *animal laborans*. (D’Entreves 1994, 5) In the modern age, it has become harder to *understand*, to *act*, and to *disclose* our identities (also, by means of this to find meaning), because animal laborans is outweighed. “The modern age has been carried with a theoretical glorification of labor and has resulted in factual transformation of the whole society into a laboring society.” (Arendt 1958, 4) The rise of the *social* led animal laborans to overcome homo faber and zoon politikon.

We have forgotten to experience freedom in public space. Labor and work are not constituents of *bios* in Aristotelian use of *vita active*, because “they served and produced what was necessary and useful, they could not be free, independent of human wants and needs.” (Arendt 1958, 13) We have all been animal laborans and even, the activities of *homo faber* could hold on as long as it was like animal laborans. With the rise of the social, the distinction between private and public/political space has faded away. On the one hand, we have gained excellence in laboring that we do in public; but, on the other hand, we have lost much from our capacity for action and speech “since the rise of the social realm banished these into the sphere of the intimate and the private.” (Arendt 1958, 49) The private has become more explicit and has extended because public is invaded by what is for private - humans started to live only along with the necessities of life- with the rise of social. With the rise of the social instead of public and political we started to perceive and define ourselves as consumers not as citizens. While the modern science alienated from the earth by positing itself in a place that is confined and away from public deliberation, automated societies alienated from the world because of ever increasing production and consumption that has led to “think of ourselves simply as an animal species governed by natural laws.” (Canovan 1998) Although the advent of automation has facilitated lots to human beings, it has also led to perceive ourselves as a *society of laborers*. (Arendt 1958, 5) As a result, we have become part of the mass society and have been missing out the ways in which we can disclose our unique identities.

#### **4.1.3. Political Power**

*Political power* is characterized by humans’ ability to act together without any intermediaries and directions. Action that is conditioned by plurality and actualized primarily through speech taking place in the public space is what constitutes the political power. Because there are no intermediaries between people to relate and understand each other, they can reveal their identities and thereby the action may be attached with a ‘who’ that gives a meaning to that action. In the sphere of plurality, experience becomes visible. Different people talking about their lifeworld presents a will to act together. The uniqueness of each and every individual leads an unexpected action that actualizes in the public space. Hence, the political power is also characterized with spontaneity. Actions coming out of the web of human relationships and understanding took place in the

political space are not oriented by an authority and it is not predictable since each and every uniqueness and their interaction may lead complex and infinite cases. Political power is not a matter that one can control, to the contrary, it can exist as long as it is common. The speech taking place in the sphere of plurality is not for *conviction* (*Überzeugung*) but for *persuasion* (*Überredung*). (Arendt 1958) People disclose their ideas, motive, and intentions not to convict other for a singular purpose that is formulated as a must on others, but to persuade each other on the grounds of *understanding*. It is important to remember that process includes one's disclosure of its identity, therefore it can also be interpreted as a possibility that one realizes itself. Such a process is not to gather followers or partisans but to recognize and relate reciprocally including one's self. "Indoctrination is dangerous because it springs from primarily from a perversion, not of knowledge, but of understanding." (Arendt 1994, 308-309) Understanding may be perverted by means of indoctrination, imposition of a singular truth or a conceptualization of good, however agents may beware of such perversion or detain from it in the sphere of plurality where they act. Hence, political power is a matter of inter-personal symbolic sharing that leads a collective action. And in short, power is "the capacity to act together in concert for a public-political purpose." (D'Entreves 1994,77)

As it stands out, Arendt distinguishes power from the concepts such as strength, force, and violence. In modern ages, politics is defined through organized violence. For Arendt, it is quite the opposite. Power as A's ability to control B's behavior is not political; it is a type of relationship of violence. Accordingly, strength is a personal matter; force is something natural (like a storm) that we can take a stand against; violence is something belongs to humans and it has been associated with political power in modern times. Violence always requires means for use and coercion, so it is strategic. It relies conviction rather than persuasion. Interestingly, it focuses on the private. It can be accumulated and used in need. In this sense, it is the opposite of Arendt's conceptualization, because for her, political power cannot be accumulated or used in need for a specific purpose; rather, it is a potential. "Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever." (Arendt 1958, 199) Therefore it exists as long as people come together and act in concert, the minute they disperse or do not act in plurality, there will no longer be a political power. For this reason, similar to action, it is boundless and can be divided without a decay or decrease, "the interplay of powers with their checks and balances is even liable to generate more power." (Arendt 1958, 201)

Furthermore, it does not depend on coercion or conviction but persuasion. Also, it is not a property or a personal matter as for strength; or it is not a natural force but a result of collective engagement of humans. It cannot be actualized in cases where acts and talk are conducted for rival or veiling intentions or violating realities but for disclosing realities “to establish relations and create new realities.” (Arendt 1958, 200) Additionally, it is not predictable since it is not oriented through an assigned purpose.

Besides, for her, power requires no justification because its legitimacy comes from the first place that people get together and from the fact that they act together in concert for a public/political purpose. It yields and grows out of free deliberation and persuasion. In this regard, it is free from the material means of economy, bureaucracy and military. It is safe to assert that Arendt sees the legitimacy as a matter of active consent rather than a static one that is presumed over intermediaries and means of coercion. Furthermore, because anonymity is what protects you from violence or the tyrant, people cannot have the possibility to reveal their identity and experiences and to generate an act together in the sphere of plurality in totalitarian regimes which are the late point that modernity has reached along with Nazism, fascism, communism, bourgeoisie, liberalism, and so on... The human condition is simply the plurality. For this reason, radical evilness tries to break off plurality and always tries to prevent rise of public/political spaces. However, although society may seem locked in a stagnation, the miracle of beginning something new that comes with the human faculty of action gives a reason to expect the unexpected. (Canovan 1998)

In modern times we can rarely observe the authentic political power. It is observed in big revolutions such as American and French Revolutions, Paris Commune of 1871, formation of Soviets with the Russian Revolution... Political power may rise suddenly, as for revolutions, “or it may develop slowly out of the efforts to change some specific piece of legislation or policy”; and historically it is possible to observe the attempts to recreate spheres of political power through action and speech “from town hall meetings to workers’ councils, from demonstrations and sit-ins to struggles for justice and equal rights.” (D’Entreves 1994, 77) She notes that “revolutions are the only political events which confront us directly and inevitably with the problem of beginning,” (Arendt 1990, 21) because they illustrate the seek for a new political space where freedom can be experienced.

#### 4.1.4. Vita Contemplativa

In *The Life of The Mind*, she examined three faculties of *vita contemplativa* that are *thinking, willing, and judging*. This examination was because mental faculties are not under examined in the *Human Condition* that is referring to *vita activa* although they also matter; and because she was affected by her observations in Eichmann trial. She raised concerns over the crisis in understanding, therefore the crisis in judging as a human mental faculty. The crisis in judging is also a crisis in understanding since perversion of understanding is at hand in the cases of indoctrination. It was also *thoughtlessness* that is “among the outstanding characteristics of our world.” (Arendt 1958, 5) It evolves out of the disengagement from opinions of the plural human beings and from the realities of one’s acts. Arendt asserts that one who refuses to remember is actually ready to do anything. Because one cannot remember what he has done unless he has given thought on it through talking about in himself and with others. “The greatest evildoers are those who don’t remember because they have never given thought to the matter, and without remembrance, nothing can hold them back.” (Arendt 2003, 95) The *Banality of Evil*, totalitarianism, and the impasses that grow out of bureaucracy or modernity have their origins in this issue of thoughtlessness. In the face of thoughtlessness, Arendt points the potentiality within the political realm that may spring thinking through imagination and understanding in the course of speech and action.

Whenever an individual engages in the activity of thinking, the concerns of conscience come to the fore inevitably. Considering the two dimensions of the public/political space, one is the *space of appearances* corresponding to the plurality in which identities are disclosed and the other is the *common world* that we dwell and that needs to a recovery as a result of the rise of the social, while conscience is a way that we focus inwardly to ourselves, judging is a way of focusing outward to the world we live in. For this reason, it is possible to manifest the *wind of thought* in the sphere of plurality through the activity of judging. (Arendt 1971, 193) It is important to note that Arendt examines judgment in two respects: one is the judgement of the agents in the sphere of plurality to act, the other is the judgment of the privileged spectators (historians, poets) who do not participate but try to make sense out of history and search for meaning of the past. Also, by referring and

analyzing the conceptualization of judgement by Aristotle and Kant, she sets a new of understanding judgment that accommodates and interplays between the two approaches (one is particularistic and the other is universalist). Such effort is also reflected in her contextualization of *collective identity* in which *opinions* are not put for a universal representation, but for a common purpose derived in the political realm and which is initially based on the disclosure of the identity of the agents in the sphere of plurality and freedom. Despite the fact that our personal interests differ from others, our interests in the public realm as citizens may also differ from our private interests. Therefore, in the political realm though action and speech, a public interest may rise that lies beyond our individual interests. A collective identity may be constituted by the action and a discourse that bushes out in political realm by virtue of plurality and freedom involving actor's continues pursuit of identity.

Even though Arendt criticizes Kant and his moral philosophy and detains from a universalistic rationalism for formulating political power and collective identity and purpose that may arise from there, she develops some of her notions through Kant's aesthetics. Accordingly, there is a capacity that one can think from the standpoints and perspectives of others, more precisely, of everyone; and that capacity refers to the *representative thinking*. The capacity to begin something new is also displayed through thinking in the plurality that will bring a new basis for judgment. Remember that there are no intermediaries while acting in plurality and understanding are freed from any indoctrination; and action and understanding is primarily actualized through speech. There is a potential that may rise among actors in plurality when act together "in concert" and this potential is reveal through speech. For this reason, power is a potential that comes into being "only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities" (Arendt 1958, 200). In this sense, power that arise among people is not a matter of control, domination, subjugation, imposition, or indoctrination. It is contingent. It is a potential or an *imagination* that is nourished by the diverse and distinct expressions of the actors about their identity that bases on their biography and life worlds in the course of engagement in the public space through speech. Consequently, speech and communication become the conditions of judgment for *validity*. Actors engaging the public sphere exchanges their subjective *opinions* while encountering with different

viewpoints, by this way, they can also form *representative opinions* of and about the public realm instead of public opinion which is based on a reductionist presumption about the mass society and legitimized only through unanimity of voting. Because: “The more people’s standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion.” (Arendt 1961, 241) Judgment, in this sense, is a fundamental ability of actors in the public space “to see things not only from one’s own point of view but from the perspective of all those who happen to be present” in the common world that we dwell in. (Arendt 1961, 221) Furthermore, this potentiality can be accompanied by factual truth, but not by rational truth that may essentialize the purpose of the people and may reproduce the conventional categories of thinking and assessment. Even though any kind of truth, especially the rational truth, carries the element of compulsion, factual truths and the practice of telling truth may be in accord with speech to generate an action since they are for accounting the past in an accurate sense. (D’Entreves 1994, 128) “Factual truth informs political thought just as rational truth informs philosophical speculation” (Arendt 1961, 238). In short, any truth that is for the orientation or domination of the sphere of plurality will hinder the potential of political power that will emerge out of representative thinking initiated by actors who primarily disclose their identities in plurality.

Her concern is about how to think and which truths to hold. (Arendt 1961, 14) The unique experiences of life of actors will present diverse truths about the past and future, however, the important point is to enhance our imagination and understanding by being guests to the minds of others in the sphere of appearances while also checking the validity of truths that that will lead to collective action. Truth is about imagination because without imagination that enhances our understanding of other realities, we could not apprehend realities laying behind a fact that we perceive from our own standpoint. In this regard, speech as a complementary part of action produce personal stories that enable actors to reveal their identity and present their opinions about a reality that they perceive. The narratives of a storyteller, Arendt claims, “tell us more about their subjects, the ‘hero’ in the center of each story, than any product of human hands ever tells us about the master who produced it” (Arendt 1958, 184). Stories as modes of speech are ways of expressing one’s identity and lived experience in history, they allow to reveal meaning for the agent

in the public 'stage'. It is also important to note that in the web of relationships that already exists, the immediate consequences of action that is for beginning anew and of speech as a way of disclosure of an agent identity, can be felt. (Arendt 1958, 184) Although the stories coming out of speech and action reveal an agent, and although we are both actors and sufferers of the stories we began, "nobody is the author or producer of his own life story." (Arendt 1958, 184) Simply because our lives do not only shape by our own acts, but also others.

Expressing stories in the public sphere through speech is also a way to disclose agent's reality to the others in order to enhance the imagination in the public sphere. Furthermore, the stories that have been shared present a kind of evidence for the reality of the experience, they are necessary part of thinking to consider which truth holds. Arendt's emphasis on imagination shows us that her approach to political science is centered on particulars, not on universals, as Ronald Beiner (2001) argues. Her conception of exemplary validity is also complementary to the importance of particularity. As reality is revealed through speech that entails actions and gives clues about the validity of the reality that is presented by the agent, the particular stories that agents reveal their story is a matter of exemplary validity.

Opposed to the currents of thought that reinforce calculation instead of thinking while praising the cult of 'individual life' which is actually 'life of the species' along with the rise of animal laborans, "Arendt offers a life that is 'specifically human': the expression designates the 'moment between birth and death' as long as it can be represented by a *narrative*, and shared with other men." (Kristeva 2001, 7) Therefore, life itself is a narrative that one cannot be an author or producer of it but can constitute it in plural of human beings in the course of action and speech. Remember that action entails speech and speech entails action. Narrating the life is by product of action and it is also, in a sense, the praxis itself. "Only action as narration, and narration as action, can fulfill life in terms of what is 'specifically human' about it." (Kristeva 2001, 8)

"The revelatory character of action as well as the ability to produce stories and become historical, which together form the very source from which meaningfulness springs into and illuminates human existence." (Arendt 1958, 324)

Men are born with the possibility to start something anew in this world and such possibility can be actualized in the public sphere through action and speech which will materialize and memorialize. “Action, in so far as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition for remembrance, that is for history.” (Arendt 1958, 9) Therefore, action and speech are the conditions for *remembrance* and the political sphere is the realm of *collective memory*. And, history is a matter of collective memory that springs out of the political action because remembrance is a result of speech and action. Remember that one does not take the responsibility for the act that he does not remember, because he did not give a thought on it and the greatest evilness are made because of thoughtlessness. Imagination and understanding that feed thinking is a possibility that one realizes in plurality. For this reason, action as a matter of imagination and engagement with others’ thoughts, produces a memory that will be remembered in the future. Consequently, the public sphere becomes the realm of remembrance and history.

#### **4.1.5. Promise and Forgiving**

Representative thinking, opinions and imagination that can spring out of the public realm also signal some faculties that can mitigate the future consequences of collective action. Arendt brings *forgiving* and *promise* as inherent to action that is irreversible and unpredictable. Because actions spring out of plurality and freedom, an action has no end point for its effects, as noted before. “The reason why we are never able to foretell with certainty the outcome and end of any action is simply that action has no end.” (Arendt 1958, 233) Every action has chain reaction and in the web of human relationships the chain of reaction is affected by each and every deeds and word, for this reason an action is unpredictable. On the other hand, action is not an artificial product that one can destroy and then re-create, the consequences of an action continue to pulse in the web of human relations. For this reason, an action is irreversible. In short, *unpredictability* and *irreversibility* are the main features of an action.

Contemplation is privileged over action in Stoicism, Platonism, and Christianity. *Vita contemplative* is raised while *vita active* is disregarded for the cause that one liberates and reserves integrity by freeing from the causes of action that are unpredictable and

irreversible. This resulted with a tradition in Western thought that nurtures contemplation instead of civic engagement and collective action. However, for Arendt, as action is not to be undermined, two faculties of *promise* and *forgiving* should be revealed in realm of action. These two faculties are about *temporality* considering promise as prospective and forgiving as retrospective.

The faculty of promise, as it is already inherent in action, is a way of alleviating the unpredictable and irreversible consequences of an action; it is an attempt to secure the future by setting some bound to detain from unwanted consequences. The faculty of forgiving, on the other hand, as also inherent in action, is an attempt to clarify what was unintended, “to absolve the actor from what was unintentionally done”; “to come to terms with past” in order to liberate us from the burden of irreversible consequences. (D’Entreves 2019) For her, forgiving is the boldest human action. (Arendt 1994, 309) As it is important to reach representative opinions in the public realm despite our subjective opinions that may be differing from others, it is also important to employ these faculties in order to generate actions and keep beginning something anew in the sphere of appearances. Firstly because “without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover; we would remain the victims of its consequences forever.” (Arendt 1958, 237). Thus, the creative action that may arise from the public sphere is dependent on the retrospective effort of reconciliation that will finally bring a prospective effort to move beyond our current imagination. Secondly because “without being bound to the fulfillment of promises, we would never be able to keep our identities; we would be condemned to wander helplessly and without direction in the darkness of each man’s lonely heart” (Arendt 1958, 237). Hence, promise is a complementary part of action and actors’ disclosure of their identity in the public realm through imagination that they enhance by engaging in deliberation and communication. It is also a kind of impulse to continue to be circumspect about the future of the action; therefore, reinforcing the dynamic feature of the civic engagement in the sphere of appearances.

As Canovan notes, Arendt’s presentation of forgiving and promise mean that there are always possibilities for new and further action to interrupt the inexorable processes and consequences due to the potentiality of polis for plurality and action. Although the human capacities of forgiving and promise cannot be exclusive remedies, in a manner of

speaking, they reveal possibilities to make a change to a certain extent. There are always possibilities to divert politics through action in plurality under favor of promise and forgiving. Moreover, only forgiving can be a way to break the chain that grows and reinforces revenge. But it is also important to note that for her, “no one can forgive himself: only the unpredictable cooperation of others can do that, and some evils are beyond forgiveness.” (Canovan 1998) Also, these remedies could only work for human consequences.

As D'Entreves notes that Arendt “maintained that one’s ethnic, religious, or racial identity was irrelevant to one’s identity as a citizen, and that it should never be made the basis of membership in a political community.” (1994, 16) There are two types of phenomena that can be considered as political: civic friendship and solidarity. Solidarity is not grounded on a common identity or shared conception of good or a common feeling, but on the action that raise in the political realm. Aforementioned, political power is not strategic as violence is. Consequently, action that bushes out in the public realm is also not strategic; but performative. Political action is not oriented, controlled, or directed by an out source, it does not serve for telos. It is the place in which freedom may spring out. In this sense, action can be guided only through principal that is intrinsic and concurrent to the action itself. This principal is solidarity. Solidarity can guide the action taken in the public realm.

Although a suffering may lead to gathering of people, it cannot lead to action. “But this solidarity, though it may be aroused by suffering, it is not guided by it, and it comprehends the strong and the rich no less than the weak and the poor; compared with the sentiment of pity, it may appear cold and abstract, for it remains to “ideas” –to greatness, or honour, or dignity—rather than any “love” of men... Terminologically speaking, solidarity is a principle that can inspire and guide action.” (Arendt 1990, 89) Hence, solidarity is a principle that arises from the action itself in the public realm, an inherent part of political action that is not constituted of sentiments. Rashaur also argues that Arendt, “an exceptionally perceptive analyst of things political, is constantly alert to the subversion of principle that can be caused by appeals to passion and sentiment.” (1992, 723) Sentiments cannot be the source of or the guide for action. Because, the mere operation of sentiments would preclude understanding and imagination that are necessary for political action. Also, sentiments may articulate the web of human relations in accordance to a morality, a common conception of good that will lead to formulizing action for or

against something or someone. For example, pity as a sentiment depends on the existence of unfortunate, “it therefore has just as much vested interest in the existence of the unhappy as thirst for power has a vested interest in the existence of the weak.” (Arendt 1990, 89) Different from pity, solidarity does not discriminate, it does not make distinction between fortunate and unfortunate or strong and weak. It is not displayed through antagonism or oppositions. As Rashaur also notes that Arendt’s conceptualization of solidarity is “able to reconcile the claims of emotional force and intellectual coherence” with one exception. (1992, 723)

#### **4.2.The Politics of Victimhood in the Light of the Arendt’s Theoretical Framework**

“Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear.” (Arendt 1958, 57)

Today’s identity politics that is converged with victimhood can be criticized within the theoretical framework of Hannah Arendt in many respects. Firstly, what is understood from identity is quite different. Secondly, what is seen as politics or politics that victimhood is issued in, is not political as long as victim identity is considered as a means over a truth or moral purpose. Thirdly, it is limited in terms of reflecting the worldly reality truly and reliably. Fourthly, it is limited in terms of reflecting political power. Fifthly, it overlooks the characteristics of action and consequently does not give weight to the possible remedies for irreversibility and unpredictability. Sixthly, as long as the issues of suffering are contextualized merely on a moral basis, it cannot reveal political action that may begin something anew and become historical.

Different from today’s identity politics, Arendt defines *identity* that is not based on similarities among human beings, to the contrary identity is what differs them. So, it is not a matter of religion, ethnic, or sexuality that works as a category involving groups of people. Due to the fact that every man’s birth is a novelty to this world, every man lives a life of their own experience and realities which makes him unique. The only thing that

is common among all humans is having this characteristic of uniqueness. For this reason, everyone has their distinct identity that can be revealed in the course of action through speech among the plural human beings in the public realm. The uniqueness of each and every one's identity is what is equal among all human beings. But it is also the reason of their distinctness from each other. Furthermore, identity is not about 'what you are', but the question 'who are you'. These two questions bring different implications for our answers. Our vocabulary tends to be employed in accordance to the question of 'what' that is for questioning our qualities, perhaps talents and occupations, but nothing more. That is why we are inclined to express ourselves in the public in accordance to what we do, our jobs, our success and achievements. However, the question of 'who' is not about our qualities, talents and, achievements, or the labor that we put as work, or the product that we have produced as homo faber. In this regard, one's identity is beyond the necessities and relations of the society of laborers in the modern age. It is beyond the artificialities of the modern world which has becoming more and more disenchanted from the quintessence of human condition, the earth. In a world in which work is almost degraded to labor and animal laboran overcome both homo faber and zoon politikan, it is hard to reach out the new ways and practices of understanding that will be generated by action which will born into and bring something anew to the web of human relations. Therefore, revealing identity is not quite possible through today's routinized and reproduced understanding that are based on the human activities of labor and work.

Action and speech springing in plurality will yield freedom of revealing identity. As action, identity is a composite of human togetherness although the experience, reality and perspective belong to the agent, they are made of through togetherness. By this, Arendt means that the meaning that we produce is sourced by others that we engage in the public place. This is firstly based on the fact that we meet with the question of 'who' among others; secondly, nobody is the author or producer of their stories although they present distinct realities; thirdly, imagination and understanding always ramble among others enduringly, so that the source of meaning is always others.

Remember the example of the stage and an actor in order to illustrate thinking in plurality. Thinking is a process that is held by one's self at first in the self-created mental stage in front of a critical audience. Even though the agent creates the stage, his acts are not independent of the audience, which is himself at time same time, in his mind. Imagine

that this stage spills over the worldly place we dwell in; the sphere of appearances is the stage and every agent is an actor in front of the eyes of others, but also a critical audience for others who co-exist with you. Moreover, alongside of being a critical audience for others, you are, the actor, also the critical audience to your acts, words, and deeds. The process of thinking that proceeds in your mind merges with the stage of public realm in which the web of human relations keep continue to be renewed and knitted in various and complex manner due to the fact that our realities and experiences constituting our distinct identities breed more and more unexpectedness to this world. We expose our identity and truths, and we are exposed by the diverse identities and truths; wherefore thinking enhances and reconfigures itself continuously, and gains meaning owing to the condition of plurality.

The stage we appear with others brings the question of ‘who’ that will reveal our unique identity -which contains the miracle of beginning something anew ever since we were born to this world- through speech and action. In this regard, identity is different from its common-held meaning, in Arendt’s political theory. It is a contingent matter like action. It is not static that one can put under a category, because it is not an answer to the question on ‘what you are’. It is not static, but dynamic and contingent due to the fact that nobody is the author or producer of its story because our realities and stories are shaped among others. The web human relationships that is continuously knitted by each and every contingency between the agents; and this reconfiguration will always affect the agents by virtue of togetherness. However, this relationality does not entail or indicate a uniformity in the description and content of identity. To the contrary, the source of variety is the relationality; or as noted before, the source of meaning is others. Meaning can be revealed by encountering the variety of opinions in the public realm in an enduring manner. Therefore, identity cannot be a static description that one designates for himself outside of human relations. Also, one’s identity is not a means to attain or demonstrate strength, force, or power in the usual sense. Because, one’s imagination that reveals the possibility to understand different realities, truths, and stories broadens in the realm of public and frees from thoughtlessness or the banality in thinking. Remember that the action taking place in the stage is not strategic but performative. Every truth that enters to the realm of public is just an opinion which has no authority over another, but only a kind of influence to persuade other opinions rather than to convict them. For this reason, one’s identity that is disclosed in the sphere of public through action and speech is not a means to struggle

over a truth, but a presentation of a story that reflects a side of an experienced reality and perspective that may enhance imagination by understanding. Consequently, identity is not a means over a truth.

Identity cannot be presented as a basis for moral authority over others. Because of this, Arendt considers acts and deeds based on guilt or pity as not political. One who considers himself as guilty of something will avoid disclosing himself in the sphere of appearances, his acts and deeds would be against others. Also, one who considers himself with a duty to act or speak for others will also not disclose himself. That's why it takes courage to appear on a stage and perform who you are, or in other words, to disclose identity among the plural human beings who you are alike only in terms of uniqueness. An act (that is not an action) or talk (that is not even a speech) you make against someone is not to disclose your identity but to convict or merely blame others on the basis of a truth or a moral judgement that you presume normatively valid for everyone. It is an effort to indoctrinate. Similarly, the sentiments that introduce moral judgment such as pity will lead to make a distinction between people, who is strong or weak, fortunate or unfortunate. It would also not result in political action and disclosure of identity, but act or talk against or for others. Introduction of morality to civic deliberation in the sphere of appearances will apply hierarchies that will not allow for disclosure of identity. The presumed identities become strategic means for indoctrination. For this reason, the politics of victimhood that is becoming more and more converged with the identity politics and presenting a moral hierarchy through the authority of victim status is not a political action that might actually constitute a realm of freedom to reveal one's identity. In short, gathering around and acting in accordance to a shared conception of good does not yield political action.

The unique individuals who are born as a novelty to this world carry different realities, experiences, and perspectives that constitute their story in this world. These stories can be expressed through speech as the complementary part of political action. Such stories are, in a way, expressions of one's identity, an answer to the question 'who'. Because the action taking place in plurality gives the sense of freedom, disclosure of identity is a practice of freedom. Although people may suffer from the same cause, their stories, the reality that have lived through is always distinct. The expression of the story, one's unique identity is therefore the practice of freedom and part of political action. Speaking about

the identity that is designated according to the shared qualities within a society is limited in terms of allowing the actors to speak about themselves and consequently to generate understanding that may fall them into thoughtlessness. Speech and action that disclose identity is a cautious enlargement of the number of perceptions circulating in the web of human relations. Here the caution is the possibility to understand realities and which truths hold. In this regard, reflection of the worldly reality and truths truly and reliably has more possibilities in the public realm through action and speech. It is simply because of the available number of information and the possibility to compare them with other relevant witnessing. Speech, communication, and the enduringly reconfigured relations of human beings are the conditions of judgement for validity. They will yield the factual truth rather than rational or moral truths. In this regard, the politics of victimhood that is becoming more and more wedged into vulgar ways of narrating the experiences of suffering is neither liberating nor accurate or efficient in terms of reflecting the worldly reality truly and reliably.

It is also important to remember how Arendt identifies representative opinion that may arise from the political realm, different from public opinion. The more the plural opinions of human beings are exchanged, the more they strengthen their capacity to think representatively. This process of exchange of opinions makes the representative opinions dynamic because it does not orient agents towards a direction that is determined and accepted as a normative and final end, a telos that is presumably inherited in the process. The condition of plurality in relation to freedom cultivates a variety of opinions that are not hierarchical to another as rational or moral truth; therefore, as the action, the representative opinions that may arise from the public realm are not static but dynamic. The political action may be shaped by the representative opinion and a public goal, but those emerges and continues to be reshaped in the course of action. As it is seen, Arendt's understanding of politics is not an essentialist or determinist reading of relations. The relationality makes both identity and action dynamic, open to change; and they cannot be reduced to a certain definition, category, purpose, or a static and passive description.

The politics of victimhood that is entangled with the identity politics is limited to reflect political power in terms of Arendt's political theory. Because it is hard to observe political action springing from plurality in the public realm as long as the politics of victimhood becomes competitive and wedged into a vulgar narrative in order to surpass the

necessities of progressive politics that is not political at all. As long as the politics of victimhood is constituted of acts and talk which are not action and speech that spring in the public realm, it is limited to reflect political power, because it is not fed by plurality which enhances understanding and imagination. But most importantly, it does not enable actors to speak of their own stories, to practice freedom to reveal their identity. Remember that power is different from strength, force and violence because it is not based on coercion or conviction but persuasion which generates acting together in concert. It is free from any indoctrination, authority or an assigned purpose. Arendt describes the cases where the public realm is driven by nonpolitical forces and becomes more and more obscured, as darkness in which increasingly people acts according to their personal interests and are not motivated to ask for more political action. For this reason, it is possible to argue that the absence of the political realm and political action disambiguates the politics of victimhood through the orientation and inducement of nonpolitical or anti-political forces; consequently, the politics of victimhood becomes more open to the influence of personal interest seeking rather than initiating something anew.

The condition of contingency corresponding to the absence of any indoctrination, control, and orientation, is key in terms of her understanding of politics. Because, political power and action generate something unexpected. In this regard, if the victim status is given as an identity in politics to achieve a certain purpose that is assigned from outside regardless of the consent of the agents or if victimhood is strictly issued as a static issue which is not considered as open to change, then it does not reflect political power which is contingent and spontaneous due to the condition of plurality. Thus, it is safe to assert that active consent of citizens through direct participation and deliberation growing in civic engagement can yield collective action in Arendt's understanding of politics; unlike today's politics of victimhood which is unfolded in democracies and based on the presumptions that the consent is passive, and identity is static and categorical.

Lastly, the identity politics converged with victimhood, by overlooking the important characteristics of political action: unpredictability and irreversibility, misses out some remedies for the consequences of action, which are: promising and forgiving. Here, firstly we need to remember that Arendt does not attribute a telos to political action. To the contrary, although political action is the best way to reflect agents' representative opinion, it does not always result with positive consequences. Because, it is unpredictable and

reveals the unexpected, the experience that is introduced for the first time as the miracle of birth to the world. This unpredictability requires *responsibility*. Here, responsibility is different from both duty and guilt. Because it is neither only a personal matter nor only a social one. It is not ascribed or burdened to an actor for indirect and nonpolitical purposes. Responsibility is firstly a personal manner. One should be accountable to her/himself. Secondly, it is a collective manner. One is “accountable to those with whom we share a common public space regarding preservation of that common world.” (Munoz 2009) Remember that the action is nurtured by plurality however is based on the disclosure of the identities. Therefore, responsibility of the consequences of an action, especially a political action is bivious. Promise and forgiving also have the similar characteristic. They are the faculties inherited in the human activity of action and they both have individual and collective aspects. These faculties can be conducted in the course of action in order to secure action as much as possible, although it is not possible to secure it totally. They are remedies of the unwanted consequences may rise above unpredictability and irreversibility features of an action which leads a chain reaction in multiple domains of life. It is possible to assert that the politics of victimhood which has become more and more competitive in the framework of progressive politics and utilitarianism, remain incapable of conducting the faculties of promise and forgiving. Consequently, it reinforces increasingly inattentive acts and talks that are based on revenge; and it remains incapable of beginning something anew which may enhance political power and reflect plurality and direct consent of the agents.

The possible proposition for an alternative way to issue victimhood in politics lays in the complementary feature of the faculties of promise and forgiving to the human activity of action which is always a potential that may arise from the condition of plurality and freedom. Remember that suffering may be a cause for people to gather together but it cannot be political if it remains a matter of either sentiments or the truth. It cannot be political if it remains attached to a moral purpose for or against others. The political action is in concert of opinions, realities, and stories of plural human beings and this practice itself is a practice of freedom, because it is spontaneous and not dominated by an indoctrination or anti-political actors (who aims to annihilate the potentiality of political realm). Suffering cannot be considered as a basis or a definer of identity of an actor. Although actors might have suffered from the same cause, their unique experiences, realities, and perspectives compose distinct stories which will construe a better

understanding of truth in the sphere of appearances with the admit of plurality. In this sense, political action through speech in Arendt's framework is the potential for agents to disclose their identity, to meet the question of who they are rather than what they are (victim is a response to this question), and to begin something anew that is decided on a representative opinion which reflects plurality and open to change without an imposition of a static and singularized goal.

The public realm as a potentiality brings the possibilities of practicing freedom to disclose and meet our unique identities different from the victim identity which only defines us in the scope of our suffering. It brings the possibility to begin something anew which might be an attempt to end or cease the source of suffering, a creative action to build on a new future. It enhances our imagination by experiencing to think with others and understand the diverse realities that compose the web of human relations. It brings the possibility to stand against the banality of evil that is fed by thoughtlessness. Because the source of suffering lays in this thoughtlessness as an outstanding characteristic of the world we live in. It is important to keep in mind that the thoughtlessness as the source of the greatest evilness in this world, making people ready to do anything, is also the thing that retains us from revealing the potential of political power that may lead a new beginning. Here, remembrance is part of the political action that may arise from the public realm. But it is not a matter of sedulousness that's only focus is retrospective; and it is not to reinforce or keep the sentiment of revenge alive. Remembrance is an imperative of thinking and action. Because, one who did an evilness to other without giving thought on it, does not remember his acts and deeds. Therefore, remembrance is part of thinking that makes us realize what we are actually doing, in consideration of the possible consequences. Therefore, it is part of the responsibility for action. Here, the insight should be gained is that the problematization of victimhood, the call for reform, and restitution of wrongs done also require thinking in plurality and remembrance that might eliminate the thoughtlessness which may arise from the process of problematization or the call itself. Remember that an action has no end; it proceeds to ways which have never been intended or presumed. It requires a remembrance by thinking, and an awareness about the unpredictability and the irreversibility of an action. The responsibility that can be taken is devious because it is firstly a personal manner and secondly a collective manner. The faculty of promise is a way to keep identity, therefore it can be interpreted as a responsibility that is firstly taken personally. It is also an effort to secure as much as

possible the unintended or unwanted consequences that may arise in the chain reaction of an action.

Therefore, a promise may enhance the capabilities in the course of a political action of a public goal to end or cease the cause of suffering both personally and collectively. It enables agents, the victims to keep their identity that is not only about their victimhood; and enables the public to build on a representative opinion which can be held accountable and can be reconfigured in the process of action. It is a prospective effort to take the dynamic feature of both identity and political action into consideration, and also to pursue that feature. The faculty of forgiving on the other hand, has also personal and collective aspects. However, it is important to remember that one cannot forgive himself unless there is a contingent cooperation of others. This is because our acts, deeds, and words are binding in the public that we live together. As the promise shows our accountability to others and to the action, forgiving shows our accountability to others and to the action as well. Forgiving is both a retrospective and prospective effort to alleviate the unintended or unwanted consequences either that have been done in the past or that might happen in the future. In this regard, it is possible to phrase that forgiving is an effort to make a reconciliation between past and future that enable us to keep revealing the potentiality of political power in the political realm. Here, forgiving and promise as complementary faculties that are inherent in political action, are also faculties to keep the potential of the public realm by eliminating -to a certain extent- the unintended consequences which may diminish the political power.

Correspondingly, victimhood can be issued in the political realm and a political action may be revealed in the public realm without absorbing the individual stories that express the unique experiences, realities, and identities of the agents; yet, the future of the political action which is a beginning something new or maybe a solution that has never been thought before, can only be secured and sustained (to an extent) to the degree that the faculties of promise and forgiving are employed along with the action. This is especially important due to the emphasis that Arendt makes: These faculties releasing us from the consequences that we caused, enabling us to continue to disclose our identities, and keeping us responsible for the consequences that we may cause, enhance our capacity to act and relieve us of being “confined to one single deed from which we could never recover” and remaining “the victims of its consequences forever.” (Arendt 1958, 237)

Since the political power is always a potential that cannot be permanently erased, there are always possibilities to for new ways of political action that can issue the most delicate or sensitive subjects through civic engagement and public deliberation. Therefore, resolutions for victimhood in politics requires: a political action arise from the human condition of plurality enabling each and every agent to reveal their distinct identity without reducing it to the victim status; being aware of irreversibility, unpredictability, and dynamic feature of the political action; refraining from revengeful acts and words for or against others in the public realm; refraining from seeking personal interest and detaching from any kind of indoctrination (either on moral or rational bases); taking the responsibility for political power by enhancing our thinking and imagination along with remembrance; and employing the faculties of promise and forgiving in order to last and advance the potential of the political power.

## **5. MICHEL FOUCAULT: POWER, SUBJECTION, AND RESISTANCE**

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) is a French philosopher and historian. Although he does not characterize himself as a philosopher or political theorist, he questions power, its forms, and its relation to knowledge. He criticizes the progressive understanding of science and history, as Nietzsche and Arendt do. He problematizes modernity and its multiple aspects that are assumed as part of the progress. He issues the treatment of the mad, sexuality, and medical profession. He analyzes the ways in which power works in a capitalist age. He is a Marxist (yet, not a Leftist intellectual who manifests a political ideology or theory as Isaiah Berlin argues) and a known figure in the intellectual circles.

In the summer of 1953, he met with Nietzsche's works, *Untimely Meditations*. His essay *On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life* affected Foucault's thoughts. Nietzsche discusses that although the academics and historians argue that the history should be read and taught objectively, so we can see it as it was without an influence of our interest, we search for ideas, concepts, and exemplary facts which may help us for betterment in our life today. By the influence of this approach, Foucault became a philosophical historian who examines history in order to shed a light on today's emergencies. Foucault is also affected by Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* and started to use genealogy which is a method to trace a phenomenon back in history to its lineages, however it is not mere an etymological work, the diverse and changing settings that constitutes the phenomenon. In this regard, it is a method that accounts for contingencies in history. Social basis for the change in moralities is what Nietzsche examines with genealogy; and Foucault examines "the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, etc., without having to make reference to a subject that is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history." (Foucault 1991, 59)

In 1961, he published *Madness and Civilization* in which he criticized today's mental treatment of the mad which is presumed as better compared to the treatment in the Renaissance. Because, the attitude towards the mentally ill people which has become institutionalized and medicalized quite different from the attitude in the Renaissance in which the mad was seen as different rather than crazy and could live among the society. In 1963, his other book *The Birth of the Clinic* is published, and it is in parallel to his approach to history in his first masterpiece. Again, although he recognizes the developments and more humane treatment in time, he pointed out how the medical profession comes along with a "medical gaze" towards the patients, which actually dehumanizes them. In 1975, in his *Discipline and Punish*, he problematizes prisons and the punishing system of the modern world from the same point of criticism. Although in modern world we assume that punishing system has become far more human compared to the past when there was public execution, the system has diminished the possibility for resistance because punishment is held and hidden behind the wall out of the sight of the public. In 1976 (other volumes in 1984), in his book *The History of Sexuality* he points out how the modern understanding around "science of sexuality" is seen as a progress and led to the loss of spontaneity and imagination which could be observed in Roman, Chinese and Japan "erotic art".

As it is seen, Foucault's examination of history and the method of genealogy are attempts to point out the irrelevancy of the claim of the modernity on an everlasting progress, or at least an attempt to remark on the possible different ways of doing things rather than an adhesion to the general acceptance. He criticizes and draws attention to contradictions of the knowledge produced in a hierarchical manner with the discourse of scientific truth and objectivity. Throughout his examination of the treatment of the mad, punishing systems, and sexuality, Foucault makes his analyses on three main levels: subject, knowledge, and power; and he examines the modes of history that have made human beings subjects, in relation to these levels. As Paul Rabinow (1991) summarizes the three modes of objectification that transformed human beings into subjects in Foucault's analyses are: "the objectivizing of the subject in dividing practices" that is power relations; "the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of the sciences"; and "the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject". (Foucault 1983, 208) He brings a new examination of power. He tackles the question of "how" rather than "why" we are

interested in politics as Rabinow (1991, 5) observes. After pointing out the “will to knowledge” similar to Nietzsche’s identification of the “will to truth” in modern sciences, Foucault emphasized how the functions of power has remained vague in the Western thought. He states a task aside from utopian outlooks, “to ask instead how power actually operates in our society.” (Rabinow 1991, 6) He also elaborates on the problem of *government*, examining how state’s power works as both “individualizing and a totalizing form of power.” (Rabinow 1991, 14) With a Nietzschean approach, he interprets the idea of justice as a means for power; yet he does not consider political struggles for justice as meaningless. As Giddens also depicts; similar to Nietzsche, Foucault puts power before truth. He comes up with a new description of power which is omnipresent and reproduced in all human relations: *The Power*. He explores the ways in which Power operates on the grounds of utilitarian rationalization, moral accountability, and political control. He uses the term *government* that furthers his analysis of Power and uses the term *governmentality* to specify the historical process that covers the changes and articulations of the modern practices and techniques of the state’s power. His views and analyses on governmentality are observed in the documentation of his lectures: *Security, Territory, Population (1977-1978)* and *the Birth of Biopolitics (1978-1979)*.

Foucault’s philosophical framework about subject, knowledge, and power along with his approach to history built on Nietzsche’s philosophical framework and method of genealogy may bring plentiful perspectives to analyze today’s politics of victimhood converged with identity politics, its reproduction and discursive power; also, to explore the possibilities for resistance. After clarifying the structure of Foucault’s philosophy, today’s politics of victimhood in relation to its problem of agency will be discussed under his framework; later, an alternative way to issue victimhood in politics will be scrutinized to overcome problem of agency and victimhood, again within his theoretical framework.

### **5.1.Foucault’s Theoretical Framework**

Foucault, different from his predecessors in the theory and philosophy of power, makes an ascending analysis of power which does not confine power to the question of ‘why’

and which does not attribute a centralized agency to the power. (Foucault 1983, 217) By focusing on the question of ‘how’, Foucault elaborates on the *techniques of power* themselves which arrange human life such as *discipline*, *docility*, *surveillance*, *normalization*, and *panopticism* which are the main techniques making it possible to adjust multiplicity; diffusing *Power* into every domains of life through each and every instance of human relations. His works can be framed under three topics: Discourse as a realm of knowledge, power as a realm of norms, and subjection in which subjects become subjective with self-conscience and knowledge. He (1983) identifies a number of ways to be able to analyze power relations and these constitute the major aspects of his works: the first one is *the system of differentiations*; the second one is *the types of objectives*; the third one is *the means of bringing power relations into being*; the fourth one is *the forms of institutionalization*; and the last one is *the degrees of rationalization*. (223)

Power does not come from somewhere; it is present in the positions within the society; and it is not centralized but diffused in every human relation. For Foucault, in both political thought and analysis, we still “need to cut off the head of the king.” (Foucault 2001, 122) The king is replaced with the state in the course of history, but the way we understand power is reproduced. The political thought reads power as either concentrated in a political figure or derived from that figure (like a king or a state). Historically, the political thought has analyzed the centralized power, the organization of state and its bureaucracy; however, Foucault unfolds the antagonistic evolution of the power that is not only centralized but also diffused in human relations, thereby he asserts that the modern state is characterized by the individualization of the power too. He calls this form of power: *pastoral power* that is not only interested in the society as a whole entity, but also in each individual particularly. (Foucault 1983, 213) Instead of reading power as descending from a sovereign figure, Foucault describes it as “a social field of forces”; and the ultimate locus of the power relations is the individual or the subject. (Fernández-Savater 2015) In a way, power individualizes knowledge so that it offers a reasoning and rationality that pertain power in each and every *micro-physical realms* of relations. (Gordon 2001) Consequently, everyone is subjected to power, and everyone reproduces power. In this sense, Foucault’s analysis of power elucidates on the “secondary and derivative instances of power”; it examines the social field of forces not as passive but terminal forms that interlinks to each other without a focal or centralized point. (Fernández-Savater 2015) Here on, I will use *Power* (with capital P) to refer specifically

Foucault's this description of power, as he identifies it "as a way in which certain actions modify others." (Foucault 1983, 219)

Although, these dominance and omnipresence of Power sound only repressive, it has two dimensions: one is repressive, and the other is productive. While the repressive feature of the Power limits the ways in which resistance may spring and subjugates every individual without an effective sense of consent, the productive feature of the Power ensures and enables human beings to get along with the society, it can enhance the potential of the human beings and increase the possibilities for creativity. It is important to keep in mind that: "In itself the exercise of power is not violence; nor is it a consent in which, implicitly, is renewable", rather it is "the total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions..." (Foucault 1982, 220) The Power diffuses to every relations and bodily practice of human beings in order to utilize in economic terms, and the knowledge of the Power is reproduced in human relations by the process of normalization in order to maintain the order and secure the obedience of the subjects in political terms. Power creates means to maintain the order to avoid unpredictability, but those means are not ideological in Foucault's analysis. He does not read Power in relation to binary oppositions (the rulers and the ruled, or the bourgeois and the workers etc.). Power is not only about ideologies, but knowledge. Foucault does not use the concept of ideology as a subject of his analysis on purpose. Ideology is an "abstraction" that cannot explain the actualities of Power, because it solidifies itself through the apparatuses of knowledge. (Foucault 2001, 119-120) Power establishes knowledge that circulates within human relations, practices, and actions; and knowledge normalizes both the productive and repressive *conducts* of the Power. Foucault (1982) specifically uses the term of conduct since it corresponds to "lead" others and "a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities." (220-221)

### **5.1.1. Governmentality**

Power's establishment of knowledge is also about what he calls the *governmentality* as the "way in which one conducts the conduct of men" through the *technology of power* on the grounds of rationality. (Foucault 1980, 148) Although Foucault's analysis on governmentality is not the same with his analysis of Power, it is part of his understanding

of power and the method he uses to analyze them by focusing on the practices and the rationality behind them rather than focusing on the sources of power and the question of 'why'. Here it is important to note that for Foucault "the problem of reason is not a juridical or ontological one; it is historical and political." (Rabinow 1991, 14) That is why he aims to make an archeological analysis of knowledge or thought that deconstructs the discursive formation on what is thinkable and unthinkable. His earlier analyses on prisons, mental houses, schools and so on reflect his understanding of a particular power (Power) that is omnipresent in all human relations; and his analyses of governmentality refer to the historical evolution of the modern power or government in relation to state, but, it is safe to assert that they are complementary to each other and they present a comprehensive analysis. He reflects on his understanding of power in multiple domains, as he does for the state. Biopower, panopticon, and normalization are the techniques of power that reflect both individualizing and totalizing forms of government.

As Rabinow (1991) notes that Foucault, in his earlier works, points out how human culture has produced different types of subjects; and in his more recent works and lectures he problematizes power in a new way. By examining the historical evolution of the new political structure -the state that has been developing since the sixteenth century-, he underlined the two antagonistic characteristics of the state's power: "both an individualizing and a totalizing form of power" as "one of the reasons of its strength". (Foucault, 1983, 213) On the one hand, the individualization of power is developed by the three modes of objectification that made human beings subjects: "the dividing practices" which objectify subjects "by a process of division either within himself or from others"; related but different from the former, the "scientific classifications" along with discourses embedded in social institutions and practices that reproduce the relations of knowledge and power; and the "subjectification" that "a human being turn him- or herself into a subject." (Foucault 1983, 208) On the other hand, state's relation to the individual is also changed in time in terms of grasping them as a total unit. Starting from the sixteenth century, treaties have become a matter of "the art of government" rather than of "advising to the prince". (Foucault 2001, 201) At the end of the eighteenth century, the political thought discovered 'the idea of *society*' which meant to attach "a new reality" to deal "with a complex and independent reality that has its own laws and mechanisms of reaction, regulations as well as possibilities of disturbance." (Foucault 1991, 242) Government was no longer only about a territory with its subjects as the sovereignty

implied. The focus on the territory and its subjects shifted to the subjects and their relations, customs, thinking, acting, the ways of doing things, and so on... Manipulation of the society with an exploratory effort to tease out its dispositions is culminated in a broader and more detailed introduction of and interventions for economy and order. Foucault (2001) underlines the introduction of the economy as essential to the establishment of the art of government. (207) The inhabitants are controlled for their economic behavior and wealth including their familial relations affecting the economy. Along with the state resources, their relations and behaviors became a statistical matter. The centralized administration of the state is accompanied with an increase in detailed documentation about the individuals. The technique of *examination* means economy of (subjects') visibility, formalization of the individuals by introducing individuality into the field of documentation, and the documentary techniques made each and every individual a "case". (Foucault 1995, 184) As a consequence of these developments, society has become the political target and the art of government has expanded its scope starting with the treaties of sixteenth century that introduced the arrangement of social dispositions towards a designated end. (Rabinow 1991, 15)

Foucault also examines the dominance of the neoliberalism in Western societies as a modern form of governmentality that is to maintain capitalism with the implications of some technology of power. As part of the relations of power, it establishes an understanding about and knowledge of the market and the social relations articulating within the market. Neoliberalism is not an ideology, and as a form of modern governmentality it pertains the technologies of power to produce an economic subjectivity which address individuals as profit-seeking actors on the basis of economic interests in the social realm. Consequently, the social realm and relations are addressed in accordance to the competitiveness of the market. In line with this, capitalism is not above the power relations, but a part of it which contributes to the developments in the techniques of Power and to the repression it causes through inequality. Capitalism is not only the accumulation of the money but also the means of collecting data and knowledge, the source for the design of cities, public and private life.

Foucault describes the characteristic of the modern state as becoming more of a matter of governing the population. Population has become the object of modern power or government; and this necessitated the introduction or specification of some forms of

knowledge in order for state to govern the population. Foucault coins the term *biopolitics* to refer this politics of the modern state over population with a central concern to foster life and prosperity; and the term *bio-power* to refer this new regime of power. He uses the term bio-power “to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of the transformation of human life... Modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question.” (Foucault 1991, 265) In this regard, although the centralization of the state or of government meant an increase in the state resources, a set of developments, introduction of economy and maintaining order as the productive aspect of the Power, it also meant an increase in its repressive measure in the very same domains of life and on the life itself.

### **5.1.2. Technologies of Power; Discipline and Panopticism**

As Foucault notes the combination of the two different forms of power (individualizing and totalizing) differing it from the previous forms of government, the bio-power works through two different axes: One is disciplining of the bodies as an object to be controlled and manipulated, and the other is to regulate population or human species as scientific categories. *Discipline* as a technique of Power along with the science of power cycles in all around the world and it can be observed in the same type of arrangement in different places. Discipline is everything combined that enforces you to act in a way. Because Power need to gain access to the bodies of the human beings in order to reproduce itself in the acts, attitudes, and daily modes of behaviors. It does not only process to force people to act different, but it also functions to make you someone. It fixes, arrests or regulates movements of the humans, their activities by establishing calculated distributions and clearing up confusions. It works not only to control and correct the signs of the body but also its operations. “Small actions, small movements, minute details that shape and connect body at each instance.” (Foucault 1995, 137) Concentration of power that covers each and every instance of life and bodily practices, actions, and movements of people; as a matter of detailly influenced discipline by some techniques, it leads to *docility*. “The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down, and rearranges it.” (Foucault 1995, 138) This machinery of power is the *disciplinary technologies* that objectifies body through training and standardization of its

actions in conjunction with the control of space. (Rabinow 1991, 17) Consequently, it produces *docile bodies* that are subjected to the Power. Therefore, the control over the subjects is actualized within the regulation of their movements, through small instances, small-scale models of power. Consider it as an *investment of power* in its micro-physical realms. (Foucault 1980, 56)

Disciplines fulfill three criteria that enables it to employ various tactics of power in order to increase docility and utility, to invest power. The first one is about exercising power at the lowest possible cost; the second one is about intensifying and extending the effects of the power without failure and limiting it to a short period of time; the third one is about linking “this ‘economic’ growth of power with the output of the apparatuses (educational, military, industrial or medical) within which it is exercised”. (Foucault 1995, 218) Although, the disciplinary technologies seem to only standardize and forge docility on bodies, it also classifies, differentiates, and treats individuals asymmetrically. The inequality existing in the everyday life in every little detail is caused by the disciplines that treat asymmetrically by the essentially unjust tiny practices of power mechanisms. The inequality which persists the differentiation between bodies, souls, and identities, is also an investment of power to secure what is to be normal and desired. In short, discipline “increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience).” (Foucault 1995, 138)

Foucault describes the *panoptic modality* of Power and its fundamental characteristic of *confinement*. (Foucault 2001, 77) He gives the examples of prisons, armies, working houses, mental houses, schools, and hospitals which have a resemblance in terms of both their function and physicality. They are the fields of exclusion, marginalization, differentiation, comparison, segregation, hierarchization, homogenization, and standardization. They are the institutional settings of the disciplinary technologies that form the Power. (Rabinow 1991, 17) The dangerous, the poor, the idle, the unhealthy people who should not be engaged in daily circles of the public are put into enclosed buildings in which they could become productive means for the society. The ordering produces a distinction between the condemned, or unwanted, or abnormal and others. Through such techniques and measures taken in confined places, subjects are aimed to be transformed into more efficient members of the society. “Through spatial ordering, the panopticon brings together power, control of body, control of groups and knowledge.”

(Rabinow 1991, 19) The panopticon model discovered by Jeremy Bentham, is designed for prisons in order to increase the utility with respect to the required labor of guardians and to the order that should be sustained by disciplining the prisoners. The model designates a tower in the middle of the prison cells which can be recognized by all prisoners and it has a clear vision of all cells. The tower remains in darkness so that it is never possible for prisoners to guess whether the guardians are present in the tower and watching them. Therefore, even the assumption on the presence of a *gaze* of the guardians who are deployed in the tower would force prisoners to behave in certain ways without breaking the rules. “For the old principle of ‘levying-violence’ which governed the economy of power, the disciplines substitute the principle of ‘mildness-production-profit.’” (Foucault 1995, 219) The model ensures that there will be no necessity for further measures to be taken in order to control and discipline the prisoners, because the utility of the mild measures is much higher in this way. Here, the model presents a system of *surveillance* that increasingly raises control over the subjects, although it is not considered as violent. (Gordon 2001) It is the productive feature of the Power which does not seek and does not use violence in the realm of prison; which decreases the crime rate and eliminates disorder. But it is also the repressive feature of the Power that increases discipline and assimilate human relations and practices to each other; that also differentiates, classifies, and treats unequally to humans as of a dividing practice to objectify the subjects.

Surveillance is a technique of Power to maintain order in which subjects are not only watched by others, but they also watch themselves because they embrace the idea that they are being watched. This explains how relations of power may also work with the desire of the subjects; as the third of mode of objectification of the subject, human beings may turn themselves into subjects. People cannot be motivated by a pure and clear repression of surveillance and control. Yet, they can govern themselves. “Their principal aim is an increase of the mastery of each and every individual over his own body.” (Foucault 1995, 137) *Self-governing subject* internalizes the norms, rules, and motives in life that perpetuates the knowledge and Power. It becomes the *productive self* who accedes to a life-long learning that necessitates to learn new things even though you have achieved somethings. Remember the third mode of subjectification in which a person is actively turns him/herself into a subject, it is a process of self-formation that covers “operations on (people’s) own bodies, on their own souls, on their thoughts, on their own

conduct.” (Foucault 1997, 177) In this sense, disciplinary power also is exercised at the level individual level of self-constitution. It frames the very identity of the individual who thinks that s/he is the arbiter of her/his own conduct and norms. Rabinow (1991) notes that it is a process of self-understanding, yet it “is mediated by an external authority figure, be he confessor or psychoanalyst.” (11) Moreover, the model also yields the objectification of the subjects (the guardians) who are in charge and have control over others. Their behaviors are also shaped by the ordering system and they order their own behaviors. “It is a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power as much as those over whom it is exercised.” (Foucault 1980, 156) Consequently, there is no owner of the power or the machinery. No one is exempted from it and everyone is a subject to it despite the fact that some positions have supremacy over others. Power can no longer be substantially identified as in the old days of kings. Therefore, it is anonymous.

The panopticon model illustrates the characteristics of Power as omnipresent, anonymous, enduring, and enforcing to all. It also reflects the repressive and productive features of power that operates through the necessities of economic utility and the ordering that ensures political obedience. It is a realm of all forms of objectification of subjects. Yet, it is still a question: how can these antagonistic features of power and different forms of objectification operate together? Aside from “a particular rationality accompanies the panoptic technology: one that is self-contained and nontheoretically, geared to efficiency and productivity”, Foucault adds another logic that accompanies to the panoptic technology, which is normalization. (Rabinow 1991, 20) This new system of operations sets norms that differentiate and compare people; and maintains itself through the deeds, thoughts, and conducts of the people. As the panoptic modality produces the distinction between the condemned or unwanted or abnormal and others, the disciplinary techniques produce and operate some mechanisms of normalizing our judgements. Normalization corresponds to a homogenization in thinking and judgment by the virtue of standardization and popularization of norms that are in accordance to power and knowledge. The technologies of power “individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialties, and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another.” (Foucault 1995, 184) As it is seen, technologies of power require a normalization that does not only totalize the subjects and their dispositions, but also individualizes them by specifying the information and knowledge about individual

differences and deficiency in their dispositions. Not only the body and bodily practices and relations of the individual are produced in the relations of power, but also the knowledge that can be gained from him. Therefore, *normalization* or *the elaboration of ethics* is also conducted by the mechanisms of power with the introduction of knowledge.

### **5.1.3. Normalization**

Foucault mainly points out a normalization with the new systems of operations of Power within different aspects of life in the course of history. “A normalizing society is the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life.” (Foucault 1991, 266) What is normalized is also multiplied within various domains of life, such as health in hospitals, knowledge and skills in schools, emotions and thoughts in psychoanalysis. The institutions of education and expertise in various domains of life are the realms of Power to establish and maintain itself by reproducing the knowledge that sources its repressive and productive dimensions. “The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the social worker-judge.” (Foucault 1995, 304) They present a system that is capable of operating general norms. Science has become a constitutive element of the experience as it is of knowledge. (Rabinow, 1983) Control of the emotions with the progression in psychology, therapy, is an example of the repressive power, despite of the fact that it is also an example of productive power which ‘normalizes’ people and gains them to the society. Standardized education is also one of the systems that operates the norms. Children become a problem of maximization to enhance the potential for productivity although there also exists repression; and become the field in which Power reproduces and hands over its knowledge. Schools as the place of discipline “makes children’s bodies the object of manipulation and conditioning.” (Foucault 1980, 125) Here, in Foucault’s analysis, education is not central for power relations, but it is a premise since it is a field that provides social governance on citizens. The elevation of the status of an expertise concluded with a form of relation among subjects that is more of monolog than a dialog in which two subjects no longer recognize each other in equal terms about the validity of knowledge. Therefore, normalization is related to the constitution of the subjective experience through knowledge. Modernity is a society of normalization that provides epistemological and ethical understandings for the modern subjects while defining the

other on the normative distinctions. This has done in matters of insanity, sexuality, civilization; and in each an 'other' is constituted: insane, woman, and the East are the examples in Foucault's analyses.

Although normalization leads to a homogeneity in judgement, it does not imply a system of legality or personalized power. Rather it is the distribution of subjects around the norms that will legitimize and perpetuate their roles in power relations. Even the institutions will follow normalization and configure their positionality as the apparatuses of power. Everyone is exposed to the spread of the normative rationality, no one or no institution is exempted from it. Because it is the knowledge that corresponds to Power. "The capacity to identify, measure, instill and regulate through the idea of the norm becomes a key technique of government." (Rose 2005, 75) Normalization works by creating categories that defines the social anomalies and deviations. The more the norms become spread in social and institutional frameworks, the more it will be internalized by the subjects. Foucault's description of the two meanings of the subject is important here: "subject to someone else by control and dependence and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to." (Foucault 1983, 212) Subjectification is one's relation to oneself on the grounds of conscience and knowledge. Consequently, being subject is also about how individuals become tied to their identity through a knowledge about themselves that is mediated by norms. Here we can remember how examination makes every individual a 'case' with a composition of small details and gaps that results in adjusting a level of status to them. In this "new modality of power; in which each individuals receives his own individuality, and in which he is linked by status to the features, the measurements, the gaps, the 'marks' that characterized him and make him a 'case'" (Foucault 1995, 191) Therefore, individuality is not something that power utterly diminishes it by standardization and normalization; to the contrary, despite and also by virtue of the normalization, human beings receive their individuality and identity that has become a case with the articulation of the norms that define the categories of rational thinking. As a result of all these, it is safe to assert that normalization is an imperative of power to govern dispositions of subjects and population by designating the normative outlook that will perpetuate both three modes of objectification of the subjects and individualizing and totalizing forms of government.

Furthermore, the historical forms and modalities of power are articulated in the discursive practices that generates normalization, and this whole process conducts the objectification of subjects and displays both the individualizing and totalizing forms of power. It is what Foucault (2002) calls *discursive formation*. Subjects position themselves according to a particular *discourse* that they are subjected to it and they are produced within it. Yet, they also produce it. They become the bearers of its knowledge that is presented in a discourse. At the end of the eighteenth century, human beings started to perceive themselves as 'knowing subjects' whom are also subjects of their own knowledge. (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983) The meaning of human being is perceived as something that can be attained by means of knowledge. Because discourses by constructing knowledge and its categories, govern what is right and wrong. In this sense, discourses mediate normalization. As the subjects who are subjected to a particular discourse are objectified, the discourse is also a constructed object by the virtue of its applications by its subjects. Discourse is an object of the Power to yield normalization.

At this point, discourses do not correspond to mere use of speech in everyday life, rather to "serious speech acts: what experts say when they are speaking as experts" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, xxiv) What makes a speech serious is to pass some validation or approval procedures and to conform with the expertise knowledge. In this regard, Foucault's analysis was on the discourses of the disciplines that have been called as human sciences. It is a "rule like way" that discourse "organizes not only itself but social practices and institutions" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, xxiv) It is not a mere analysis of the concepts that are used in different fields of disciplines, but the relation that they form and contextualize between subjects and objects of those disciplines within a strategy. For example, the liberal strategy of government assigns a key role to the experts to shape responsibilities that are not only public but also private. (Rose 2005, 74) The normative deportments assigned to the subjects are determinative of not only one's relation with the public, but also to one's self. Although their systems of discourse may vary, those disciplines which rule out the discursive practices serve to produce justified truth claims by articulating the power relationships in every division of life. We may consider discourse as the dynamic means of power that repeats, reproduces, systemically articulates knowledge and norms for the subjects. It circulates the second hand knowledge that is imparted from the scientific expertise which even constitutes (both relational and private) experience. It is a form of representation that offers a particular rationality and

reasoning; consequently, a normativity by the virtue of the power of knowledge. The subjects who are bearers of knowledge and norms are produced within a discourse, because discourse is the object that perpetuates the production of knowledge and norms at the very junction point of the web of human life consisting of its acts, thoughts, relations, communication, and practices. It is also important to note that Foucauldian analysis of discourse does not only correspond to mere analysis of linguistic relations; it comprises both the discursive and non-discursive practices. Because archeology serves to reveal “the relations between discursive and non-discursive domains”, he poses his analysis as a materialist one. (Foucault 2002, 179) Consequently, discourse is an articulation of discursive and non-discursive practices and relations.

Remember that Power establishes knowledge; and it is knowledge. This is similar to Francis Bacon’s famous phrase: “Knowledge is power”. (1597) Yet, with a different explanation. For Foucault, the knowledge that has the explanatory power, arranges not only the bodily and daily practices, but also the human conduct, mind and soul because a pastoral power cannot be exercised without knowing about the minds and souls about its subject and without producing a truth: “-the truth of the individual himself.” (Foucault 1983, 214). It is the same power that objectifies them by its technologies of normalization, determining the truth about the whole community and every individual in particular. Knowledge corresponds to Power, but it is because knowledge articulates and composes the relations of power, rather than being a just and useful means for it. In this regard, discourse as a distributor of knowledge works for normalizing individuals through rationalized means to turn them into meaningful and docile subjects. (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983) Discourse as a realm of knowledge serve to constitute the subjective experience.

#### **5.1.4. Polemics and Problematization**

Power relations always have a reference to ‘the other’ that is outside of the social normality in order to point out and to dehumanize the differences that challenge the Power or the knowledge. Truth is established by the same means; consequently, so is morality. The discourse carries a baggage full of such differentiation and means of differentiations that also work for establishing truths. Such truths can be presented within different

definite frameworks. Polemics is a style of public discussion that is employed to reproduce such truths of different domains. Foucault (1991) identifies three models of polemics: religious, judiciary, and political model; and he notes that the political model is the most powerful one today. (381-390) He makes a political distinction between polemics and problematization. Polemics present a general doctrinal framework about political issues; anyone who does not agree with this framework is regarded as enemy and any argument coming from him is disregarded. (Gutting 2005, 26) In this sense polemics present a set of interests and opinions that constitute a party; and the ones who are not members of that party, 'the others', are seen as vital enemies whose interests and opinions cannot meet with theirs.

Foucault finds polemics as 'sterilizing'. He points out the danger in using polemics with the belief that one can access to truth by the use of polemics. (Foucault 1991, 381-390) It is a repetition of vulgar and banal uses of arguments, or simply of clichés from a strictly defined standpoint. And, most importantly, it cannot present an original idea. Problematizations, on the other, do not present arguments that are derived from a doctrinal framework, although they are not apart from and independent of them. But posing a problem in politics is not necessarily to re-enact the questions formulated within a doctrinal framework or not to begin asking questions within the scope of that framework. Rather, it is to pose problems and questions that we come up from the lived experience; and these questions should not only be propounded in a specific type of doctrinal framework but variety of them. (Gutting 2005, 27) Furthermore, Foucault by referring to the Richard Rorty's criticism on him -about how his explanation of power does not appeal to a "we"-, notes that a 'we' is not necessarily previous to the question and it can be the outcome of the question once it is posed in new terms. (Foucault 1991, 385) A 'we' who have a consensus on values and traditions that constitute their thought, is not necessarily a primary condition to pose problem and original questions in politics. It is safe to interpret that his approach underlines that the identification or a grouping based on shared values and traditions are not necessary for political purposes because it may easily assign a doctrinal framework to the act of questioning. To be able to pose new questions and to pursue the act of questioning in plurality that can escape from interventions and limits caused by the power relations, problematizations that are disassociated from polemics and their strict frameworks as much as possible, are better

ways to present new ideas and reflect on the lived experience rather than mere prediction and assumptions about experience constituted by discourse and its truths and knowledge.

#### **5.1.5. The Question of Freedom and Resistance**

Considering how power relations and its modes and techniques objectify and subjugate individuals; how power relations reproduce knowledge that is actually an imperative of power relations; and how power relations have both individualizing and totalizing forms of power that makes human life -with all its aspects- a matter of governmentality, the question of freedom raises. The Western society acknowledged egalitarianism, democracy, freedom, parliaments, and so on, as part of progress and development. However, there is also the dark side which remains unmentioned, that is the development and proliferation of the disciplinary mechanism, according to Foucault's analysis. "The Enlightenment, which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines." (Foucault 1995, 222) The notion of liberty for example, is a technical invention that is for dis-individualization of power. In consequence, individual is not important, rather the position in itself is important. By building on Foucault's analyses, Rose (2005) construes on the question of *Powers of Freedom*; how people in a normative society are playing the game along with others, even though no one forces or punishes them.

"Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free." (Foucault 1982, 220) The coexistence and co-operation of productive and repressive practices of Power show that power works in ways that it "acts through practices that 'make up subjects' as free persons." (Rose 2005, 95) This is because Foucault's Power differing from domination, presupposes subjects' capacities to act and calls itself into being in every acts of human beings (its subjects). Consequently, freedom is a result of the productive and repressive conducts of the Power; also, it is a request for government in the name of itself. Freedom is an objective but also an instrument of Power. As human beings governed through subjectification and objectification, the governmentality produces a freedom that can be advanced as long as the subjects become tied to the strategies and technologies of power that adjusts every inch of human life and relations. Although the totalizing forms of government may seem delimiting the practice of freedom because it leads to stigmatization, surveillance, confinement, and so on, its

concurrency with individualizing forms of government attributes a sense of freedom to its subjects by means of identification and differentiation as part of their subjectification.

In the search for freedom, self-realization and actualization, we have become subjected to bounds of our own identity and we have created new ties by means of therapeutic measures of expertise and the knowledge it produces. Freedom, therefore, is not a state nor a quality that one can attain it by either opposing to government or becoming more and more identified within a society. “In this game, freedom may well appear as the condition for the exercise of power.” (Foucault 1982, 220) Freedom is an artefact of government but it cannot be regarded as a mere illusion, as Rose (2005) argues. In line to Rose’s argument, freedom is a kind of power that we relate to ourselves and to others, because we demand to be governed in the name of it. Moreover, besides of attributing a certain understanding about how the subjects of Power should be governed, freedom also creates a moral ground to designate what sort of moral agency should be attained by those subjects. Freedom has become a norm that is linked to civility in today’s liberal outlook.

Civility as a call of liberalism works as a public gaze and a basis for differentiation that does not only assign a certain way of behaving, acting, and thinking in the public but also in the private sphere. As a form of (discursive) power, it necessitates the self-governing, self-mastering, and self-shaping of subjects by taking their self-responsibility. Besides, the incivility is also an instrument of power to differentiate and designate the abnormality to be able to process the normalization by the disciplining measures of power. In conclusion, Foucault does not claim that liberalism is a form of government, rather it promotes an ethos that should be normatively attached to the question of how to govern. (Rose 2005, 70) Consequently, liberalism is employed by means of normalization and rationality in every field of life. Yet, freedom is not opposed to the power relations, it springs from the social field of forces, but when the actors come together and their relations are unfolded, their capacity to act may lead them to practice freedom upon themselves, as a dynamic historical possibility. In Foucauldian framework, the value of freedom is rather “a way of practicing upon oneself”. (Rose 2005, 95) Because the absence of government does not mean freedom or possibility for freedom. To the contrary, historically, freedom is a conduct of government. “It is a mobile historical possibility arising from the lines of force within which human being is assembled, and the relations into which humans are enfolded.” (Rose 2005, 96) Freedom “consists in the

struggle to subvert the project of normalization” by using the means of power that already been reproducing in the acts and deeds of every individual, in order to experience a “self-creation”. (Armstrong 2008, 27) Therefore, in order to understand Foucault’s understanding of freedom in relation to struggle, we should examine his understanding of resistance.

Freedom as a concept is part of power relations that has its both repressive and productive conducts. It works along with the implications of power relations that diffuse into every aspect of life. Yet, Foucault does not present a pessimistic view that freedom and resistance cannot be issues at all. Rather, by counting the omnipresence and diffusion of Power, he underlines the importance to consider the modalities, forms, and features of Power which should urge us to think these concepts and phenomena in a different way of analysis. By defining power, different from the way political thought has done, as a social field of forces, he understands power as “the relation between one action and another action” or “a force exercised on another force”; and in this relation, the actors are “always capable of action and a response that is unpredictable.” (Fernández-Savater 2015) That is why resistance can be observed not despite of but because of power relations. Power yields itself and its knowledge by relying on the capacities of its subjects to act. “Power exists only when it is put into action.” (Foucault 1982, 219) The actions of the subjects are normalized, disciplined, and put under control by the virtue of their capacity to act which continue to reproduce what is normal in the social field. But this capacity cannot be assumed as static, closed to change, and as always predictable. Although Power functions in a way that it can establish in order to avoid unpredictability, by the virtue of the capacity to act, a response of the human being is unpredictable and uncontrollable.

Foucault (1983) identifies three forms of struggle in history: “either against forms of domination (ethnic, social, and religious); against forms of exploitation which separate individuals from what they produce; or against that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way (struggles against subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission).” (212) And, he underlines the importance to examine the commonalities between the forms of resistance in these struggles. Firstly, he notes that the struggles are not confined to a place or a country, rather they are ‘transversal’; secondly, their aim is “the power effects as such”, how the exercise of power is affecting the human life; thirdly, they are “immediate” because people react to the exercises of

power which affect them at first hand, consequently, rather than identifying a 'chief enemy' they revolt against the 'immediate enemy' and they do not seek a final point in the future to be achieved, in this sense they are 'anarchistic'; fourthly, while they claim for the right to be different -as individuals- against the totalizing forms of power, they also object to the individualizing forms of power that differentiates and puts them in categories by dividing their community while trapping them into their own identities; fifthly, they are against "the privileges of knowledge" in relation to power with a skeptic and relativist approach about the questions on truth; and lastly, these struggles are pertinent to the question of 'Who are we?' in the face of "abstractions, economic and ideological state violence" which do not regard them individually, and of "a scientific or administrative inquisition which determines who one is." (Foucault 1983, 211-212) These struggles are not taking the institutions of power, or the groups -who attain superior positions such as elites, or classes-, rather they take the forms of power that fluctuates in the every instance of human relations and reveals its productive and repressive features by both totalizing and individualizing its subjects. As the fourth common point shows, they are against "the government of individualization" rather than being merely either against or for "individual". (Foucault 1983, 212)

The commonalities between the three types of struggles underpin the relevancy of Foucault's analysis of power. His approach to resistance is consistent with his theoretical framework despite it seems complicated. As Power is not concentrated in the hands of a group or a sovereign, struggles occur not against a specific persona or a sovereign, rather against the forms of power that subjugates individuals through the technologies of power in everyday of life. Even though people may revolt against the reasons, effects of power, or major figures that frustrate them at first sight due to the immediate nature of their reaction, they revolt against the apparatuses of power that treat human beings as subjects and govern not only their public life but also their private life including their acts, behaviors, thinking, and experience.

Foucault does not read resistance apart from the power relations, as he does not read freedom apart from it, too. He claimed that wherever there is power, there is resistance. Foucault does not present the relation between power and resistance in binary oppositions. The interaction between the social forces is where the power is reproduced and exercised, but it is also where the resistance may occur as a response to power. While

he examines *plebs*, he underlines that they occur wherever the power is exercised. Although they are “not a real sociological entity”, they in a sense resist and escape from power relationships; this does not imply less or more of a docile position, rather it is “a centrifugal movement, an inverse energy, a discharge” and the measure of plebs form a “motivation for every development of networks of power”. (Foucault 1980, 138) Therefore, any measure that reduces plebs and identifies them as ‘the plebs’ would mean an attribution of substance and an essentialist identity which will work for the power relations to develop its new instances. But, according to him, plebs do not reveal a binary division between a party of power and a party of resistance. The movement of disengagement can be observed in both proletariat and bourgeoisie, in every soul and body. As power, resistance passes through everyone; and, it can be rendered as a “breakdown in the given identities”. (Fernández-Savater 2015) It either happens or simply does not exist, in this sense, it is can be rendered by the potentiality of an action.

“At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential freedom, it would be better to speak of an ‘agonism’ of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation.” (Foucault 1983, 221-222)

The social field of forces is the womb of the effects of power, and in it everybody becomes a subject and a constitutive actor of Power. Consequently, the capacity to act of every individual reflects both repressive and productive conducts of Power. Yet, this capacity to act is not a paralyzed reflection of the will and an enchained freedom. To the contrary, the capacity to act is performed by a will which cannot be fully controlled, along with a sense of freedom that is not determined with an essential identity and function, rather that reveals itself while alternating between compliance and resistance in the course of every rebound of the power relations. That is why resistance can be observed wherever the Power is. In a sense, Power creates its own counter-movement that challenges to its practices while its forms continue to circulate in an infinite plurality of action that aim to decrease unpredictability and to maintain order. Because, power relations are limited to make the insubordinate submit in cases of confrontation. “It would not be possible for power relations to exist without points of subordination, which, by definition, are means of escape.” (Foucault 1983, 225) Therefore, power relations while introducing the mechanisms that will preserve the diffusion of power into every instance of life by relying

on the capacities of action of its subjects, those capacities to act as such may also reveal an insubordinate response by putting a *strategy* into operation for confrontation.

Foucault (1983) explains how he contextualizes the concept of strategy. Firstly, it corresponds to the use of a set of means to attain a designated end. Secondly, it corresponds to designation of partners by also designating their action along with having the notion that the action is their own. Thirdly, it also means to predetermining the precautions that should be taken in the case of confrontation, so that the opponent will not be able to employ his means to struggle and will finally either be doomed to give up or lose. In this sense, a strategy is quite similar to Foucault's mechanisms of power which aim to yield its knowledge and power through its subjects without enabling them to digress from discourse. The technologies of power work in direction of reproduction of power and knowledge. The knowledge is totalizing, yet it is also individualizing so that a meaning is attached to every individual particularly, in this way, they think that the knowledge that they have -either about their conduct, soul, acts, or identity- belongs to them. And, it is produced in a way that as long as everyone is subjected to and a constitutive of Power, they may remain submitted to Power in the cases of confrontation with the limits of Power. As it is seen, strategy is not something that only belongs to power relations, but also the relations of struggle. Because it is not possible to examine the two separated from each other.

Every power relation harbors its own of strategy of struggle *in potentia*; and the power relations and struggles do not become unified or obscured. (Foucault 1983, 225) They both present a limit and a reversal point to each other; and both appeal to each other while permanently linking to each other, because the relationship between the two continue to stage the mechanisms of power. Even though the two may have and present different set of meanings, linking, and types of intelligibility, they share "the same historical fabric" and they both "must have a reference to the other." (Foucault 1983, 226) This means that they are similar in terms of having a strategy; and referring to another in order to make him act and think himself as the arbiter and to establish to the categorical division between 'normal' and 'abnormal'. Here, it is important to notice that Foucault does not glorify or attribute an essential meaning to a strategy of struggle. "...Every strategy of confrontation dreams of becoming a relationship of power", so struggles use the strategy which is also employed by the forms of power; "and every relationship of power leans toward the idea

that, if it follows its own line of development and comes up against direct confrontation, it may become the winning strategy.” (Foucault 1983, 226) The resistance to the limits reproduced by Power is also an attempt to reformulate the power relationships. Consequently, struggles aim to become the winning strategy to become a relationship of power. If a struggle is able to apply a strategy that is codified to produce general effect, then it becomes a revolution.

## **5.2. Reading the Politics of Victimhood in the Light of Foucault’s Theoretical Framework**

Foucault’s analysis of power relations brings a new perspective to point out the problem of agency in today’s politics which is far more diffusive. His historical analyses also help to reveal the possibilities for pursuing an alternative or an effective way to take an action in relation to his investigation on the possibilities and commonalities of resistances. Moreover, his analysis on the relationship between power and knowledge accompanying with discourse and normalization may present a deeper investigation on the question of truth and identity. For these reasons, we can present some questions regarding the politics of victimhood converged with identity politics today, in Foucauldian reading of power relations and possibilities of resistance. We can discuss how the problematization of victimhood would work within social field of forces by referring to his reflections on freedom; how could we understand identity considering the subjectification and objectification processes within the context of normalization and discursive formation; how can we read the politics of victimhood with Foucault’s resistance and if it can present a strategy. And, we can present an alternative way to problematize victimhood in politics that is not of polemics but of problematizations and action in resistance.

In the social field of forces that we are part of, it is not possible to talk about a sovereign who is responsible for all matters concerning our societies. Because, according to Foucault’s reading, the Power is constituted of actions of all of us, even though some may hold a superior position socially. Power is anonymous because it passes through everyone, not a party or a class group. This is especially because it reveals itself as knowledge and norms that continue human life within its all domains. It is possible to

think an individual as both trivial and important to construct social realities, since we are all subjected to Power. Yet, we are the constituents of Power. For this reason, it is important to understand that, as victimhood, the politics of victimhood is a result of power relations that all human beings reproduce. Because, the knowledge and rationality laying under our actions are already the reflections of power relations that configure our daily lives. The norms that we act in accordance display in the micro-physical realms of Power that constitutes, affects, and easily varies within every realms of life. Here, Foucault's reading of power relations presents a different way to understand victimhood, its politics, and identity. These phenomena cannot be read in binary oppositions and previous ways of understanding power. Instead, his analysis provides a theoretical framework that does not retain the part of individuals in the making of knowledge, discourse, norms -that of power relations-. In line to this, rather than focusing on the distinctions based on the victim and perpetrators, just and unjust, rightful and un-rightful, moral and immoral, his analysis underlines the importance to make an analysis of 'how' the power relations work in such a way rather than 'why'. His analysis of power reminds us that as much as other phenomena that are reproduced in the social field of forces, victimhood, its politics and identity are also reproduced in the power relations. Consequently, the politics of victimhood along with the identity that it centralizes may well be a form of repressive power, not only productive. Power is not necessarily bad or evil in Foucault's analysis, but it is dangerous. In this sense, his analysis of power may well enable us for a bitter analysis of the dangers or consequences of the politics of victimhood that is not necessarily bad but can be dangerous if it performs as a power in Foucauldian sense.

Since Power is a composite of human acts, what can be produced as a political change is at the hands of individuals who in a way perform power in their every little involvement with life. However, this is hugely affected by the diffusion of Power that is not only totalizes individuals through their acts, norms, thoughts, deeds, and behaviors, but also individualizes its subjects in particular, so that they consider their conduct as their own. Thus, it is possible to regard the politics of victimhood as a process of subjectification. In this regard, it is hard to talk about an agency who might act or think outside of the framework of power relations. Every difference that one considers for oneself is an object of the Power that does not reveal itself only in objectification of subjects through the inquiry of the status of the sciences or ethics and of the dividing practices, but also through the self-government and self-formation. In this regard, aside from the fact that

although the politics of victimhood mainly emphasizes the role of actors who suffered, in the relations of power it is already hard to talk about agency that an individual is not subjected to Power; it is also hard to talk about an agency within the politics of victimhood. Meaning that, the problem of agency is not only problematic because of the relations of power in politics, as the politics of victimhood would formulate; but also because the politics of victimhood is part of the power relations that subjugates, normalizes, differentiates, totalizes, and treats individuals asymmetrically as techniques of power to invest in itself.

Hence, it is possible to observe the traces of governmentality in the politics of victimhood today. It totalizes individuals by categorizing them and it individualizes them by referring to the differences. In this sense, the identity politics converged with victimhood presents an identity in which a person is both different from others and also similar to them. Categorically the concept of victim totalizes the individuals who have suffered from a cause and differentiates not only them from others but also others from them. Although this sounds natural, the politics of victimhood as part of power relations also reproduces the ways in which Power both individualizes and totalizes; in which it objectifies its subjects by the aforementioned three modes. As Power, it presents a rationality and normalization by individualizing knowledge that also fits to the totalizing categories of power relations.

The technologies of power conduct what Foucault calls examination and surveillance. Power relations work in a way that every individual becomes a 'case' whose deeds and dispositions are noticed not only by the others but also the individual himself. The small details about ourselves and the gaps that can be defined by the differences that we have become tied to our identity. Similarly, in the politics of victimhood, the logic of governmentality reveals itself by both totalizing individuals in categories of victim and perpetrator and individualizing them by referring to the small details and gaps about them. A victim can be seen as a case, and furthermore, victim can see himself as a case, too. It is important to remember that subject does not only mean that one is controlled by another, but one also become tied and dependent on his own identity that is grounded on either conscience or self-knowledge. It is safe to assert that the politics of victimhood produces the knowledge about one's identity of victim and it also describes the gaps between victim and others. As Power, it has a reference to 'the other' who is considered

as not fitting to the normality and contradicting with the reasoning. As other relations of power, the politics of victimhood is based on the dividing practices that treat and consider individuals asymmetrically. Rose (2005) notes that: “Government through the calculated administration of shame” is also an exemplary of means of power to arrange human relations on the basis of the normality, what is to be ashamed or not. (73) As it is possible to read issues of victimhood are not free from such means, it is also possible to read that the politics of victimhood may also use such means on the basis of a normative understanding of victimhood and constructing binary oppositions between social forces. Consequently, it may impute the shame to its ‘other’, despite that it opposes against the calculated administrations of shame or normalization that had been enforced (or still enforcing) on the victims.

In this sense, the politics of victimhood, as of anything might be in Foucault’s analysis, reproduces a normality and an elaboration of ethics that are relevant in terms of the knowledge it produces. As Power, it attributes an abnormality to the categorized other, and dehumanizes it, because it carries the risk to challenge the knowledge, truth, and ideas that the politics of victimhood produces to maintain its power. Furthermore, the politics of victimhood, carries out a discursive formation that frames the social positions along with the meanings and rationality attributed to them. The discourse that mediates the knowledge; a discourse that does not only organize social practices but also the institutional ones by offering a ‘rule like way’ for the measure of things. It reproduces a knowledge which present the only accepted truths and ideas that have relevancy for the reality, and that gains a status for the ‘knowing subject’. In this sense, the discourse on victimhood may serve to establish a knowledge that works not only to problematize victimhood, but also to present it on the basis of scientific, sociological, legal, or moral inquiries, so that one could gain a status in power relations.

As noted, the politics of victimhood and its discursive framework tender a way of understanding the social reality and propound a kind of dependence to that specific understanding in order to invest more in the power of its politics. It necessitates a process of self-formation in which one becomes attached to the identity of victim, since its politics reproduces the knowledge and practices that creates a ground for recognition of the victimized individuals. As noted in the literature on the politics of victimhood, the suffering becomes the measure of one’s identity in society and victim becomes an identity

that one is expected to become tied to it. The individual, as subjected to the discourse of victimhood, perceives himself only in the limits of his victim identity. As of the all other matters in Foucault's power relations, it is safe to assert that as one of the three modes of objectification of subjects, the politics of victimhood results in the self-perception of the individuals to think of themselves as the arbiter and results in the self-formation of them to think themselves with the victim identity.

The third mode of objectification of subjects -in which the individual turns himself into a subject because knowledge is individualized and the individual thought of himself as the sole arbiter of his acts, deeds, behaviors, and conduct- is the explanation for why Power can only be exercised over free subjects. As noted before, the liberal understanding of freedom is an artefact of government. However, it is not an illusion; it is a kind of norm that is assessed in the power relations. In this sense, if it becomes an objective of the politics of victimhood, it would mean nothing much than repetition in power relations. Yet, Foucault sees freedom as something that one can practice upon himself. Remember how Armstrong (2008) emphasized the possibility of self-creation in a Foucauldian reading of resistance. By virtue of the capacity to act, which is where also power relations are yielded, one can always act to subvert the norms and dispositions. Foucauldian reading of resistance presents the possibility for struggle as omnipresent as Power, because as the power is exercised within every human action, it carries the risk to face a revolt in the very same human action. The possibility of resistance is aimed to be reduced in cases of confrontation; and Power always aims to avoid unpredictability in order to maintain order, but it is the human action that is unpredictable, as for Arendt, in Foucault's reading. This unpredictable action reveals itself in the course of history as immediate reactions that are taken against the effects power as such. But they mainly stand against the technologies of power that subjugates individuals by both totalizing and individualizing forms. In this regard, the potentiality and unpredictability of action may lead a practice of freedom on one's self within a resistance that escapes and tries to stand out of power relations.

Therefore, it is also possible to read the politics of victimhood as a kind of resistance to the effects of power relations that both individualize and totalize individuals, objectify them by differentiating, put them into scientific categories, and lead a self-governing in which the individuals subjectify themselves. Yet, it is open to argue whether the politics

of victimhood leads a practice of freedom of individuals on themselves by taking action that is subverting the normality produced within the power relations and whether it leads to a breakdown in identities individually without being absorbed in the totality but springing with the plurality.

Remember that power ensures an economic utility in terms of our practices and it also diminishes the possibility of revolt and resistance by securing an obedience in political terms. It aims to maintain order to avoid unpredictability. Yet, it does not mean that the knowledge it establishes never change or the norms do not shift over time. Norms can shift but this does not necessarily end power relations. To the contrary, as a result of a winning strategy, it may present a new way of articulating power relations, but this new articulation of power relations would still reveal the Foucauldian Power. Here, it is possible to talk about an effective way of changing the normative outlook in a community about a certain issue, yet its means are the very same means that Power also reveals itself as repressive. If we consider the politics of victimhood in an attempt to create an awareness for some sort of injustice, it can only be done by challenging every single norm we reproduce that is maintaining power relations as it is. However, this challenge cannot be considered as apart from those power relations. Consequently, this makes the resistance that is put up via the politics of victimhood a strategy of struggle that challenges the way in which power relations are articulated today and proposes a new way for it although it cannot abolish the power relations. In this sense, strategy of a struggle presents a power that will also establish knowledge, create discourses diffusing into every human relation, and has its both repressive and productive dimensions. However, we can count of some aspects that may strengthen the productive dimensions of resistances that will enhance freedom and political discussion, enabling us to escape the constraining and limits of power relations on human life.

The means of power relations to maintain order are not ideological apparatuses, but apparatuses of knowledge; and ideology is an abstraction that only proposes a doctrinal framework which reproduces already framed and known truths. In this sense, as polemics that are bind to a doctrinal framework do not present new ideas and actions for political change, they canalize to the river of knowledge that is not singular but irrigates the whole in regularity. In this regard, in politics of victimhood, it is better to avoid polemics that will reveal no new ideas but repeat the vulgar uses and arguments that has become clichés.

Also, because it reads the social phenomena in binary oppositions that an opposition who disagrees with the doctrinal framework is considered and treated as an enemy, it cannot account for different perspectives and realities. It deepens the dividing practices on the basis of the constitution of 'the other'. Consequently, if the politics of victimhood that has become part of identity politics is ideologically positioned, then it heavily relies on polemics rather than problematizations. Problematizations may provide a more independent position to pose questions about victimhood and regard for the plural points of views that may contribute to find creative solutions. Furthermore, it is safe to assert in parallel to the debate between Foucault and Rorty that posing a question as 'we' would imply a shared set of values and truth, a doctrinal framework, therefore, it is better to pose questions that are not polemics but problematizations that does not take a 'we' as the starting point. As much as the victimhood becomes a framework of 'we' as it becomes a matter of identity politics, it may avert a political discussion in plurality, therefore avert the possibilities for new solutions. As Foucault emphasizes a 'we' would be a result of that problematization rather than an accepted and approved 'we' in advance even before posing a question.

An essentialist attribution of an identity is the repressive aspect of power relations that objectify subjects and controls human action in order to avoid unpredictability; if a 'we' becomes a starting point, as the 'we' of victims becomes an identity, then it would also mean to avoid the unpredictability in human action and the plural experience of human beings. So, the more individuals become subjects of a totalizing discourse on the victimhood, the more they will be detained from a political action that is unpredictable in power relations and that is a possibility for one to practice freedom to act outside of power relations on oneself. Power establishes its knowledge to even constitute experience; if the politics of victimhood as part of power relations and as a possible form of resistance produces a knowledge that standardizes experiences of individuals on the basis of victimhood and reproduces an identity as a starting point for any political discussion, then it would not be possible to talk much about a freedom that individuals practice on themselves within action, rather it would be a freedom that is presented as a normativity in the power relations and that we are governed in the name of it.

Foucauldian analysis of power does not only present a new approach to examine the relations of power but also resistance as part of it. As Power, resistance passes through

everyone. In this sense, resistance is not to be examined in binary oppositions, such as classes. A resistance may take place in anywhere since Power is everywhere. In this context, resistance signifies the possibility to diffuse into every human relation by producing a new set of knowledge and norms that may prevail the previous ones. Since every technique and mode of power are embodied in judging, thinking, acting and speaking of human beings, resistance may also result in changes in all. So far, it is possible to read the politics of victimhood as a form of resistance, but since struggles pose a strategy that to become the winning strategy to re-articulate power relations, it performs as the power relations are exercised because they both rely on the human capacity to act. Resistance comes from the womb of human actions in which Power is constituted. Therefore, the politics of victimhood is a part of power relations; it is both repressive and productive; it may perform resistance, but it does not belong to a specific group and it passes through everyone, like Power; it could result in changes if it challenges the norms, knowledge, and discourses that are reproduced by every individual in the micro-physical realms of Power; in order to present new ideas it needs problematizations rather than polemics; to create a breakdown in identities, in order to for individuals to practice freedom on themselves, it needs actions taken by individuals that subvert every norms and knowledge reproduced by the power relations that subjugates them and traps them into their own identities.

For Foucault, although there were examples of struggles against the forms of power that subjugate individuals, nowadays it has become more of an issue. This is because the technologies of power are extended and diffused even more as governmentality has become a matter of both totalizing and individualizing methods. The reading of power in the context of sovereignty in political thought and analysis has remained inadequate to understand how today's power relations are diffused. On the other hand, the progressive readings of history as a claim of modernity present every development in human life as pure progressions and centralizes human beings without pointing out the both the repressive and productive conducts of Power. Foucault's conceptualization of Power, governmentality, and knowledge bring a new approach to read resistance and it urges us upon to question what is understood from freedom. His works underline the necessity "to abandon notions of any human essence, of the human being as the centre, originator, principle of history, epistemology, language or politics." (Rose 2005, 96) Consequently, by enabling us to think of power more comprehensively with its all dimensions and

measures, his theoretical framework propounds a set of tools to be able to count for the impasse (such as the problem of agency, essentialist reading of identity, discursive formation etc.) of the politics of victimhood today. Moreover, his effort to analyze the reproduction of the understanding about the concepts such as freedom resonated with only positive meanings in modern times can be read as an appeal for caution. We have noted that despite the politics of victimhood may seem liberating and as part of the developments in modern times that have reached us to representative democracy, it is not independent of power relations and its repressive conducts. In this thesis, it is the aim to enlighten on this caution and to search for alternatives to alleviate the danger coming from Power's repressive conduct and to strengthen the productive one.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In politics, victimhood has been widely problematized to issue some subjects related to the experiences of those who had suffered or have been suffering of a harm done by another, others, or an institution. The rise of the paradigm of representative democracy enabled and encouraged political actors to elaborate on such issues in order to confront the heavy past and consequences of that past experiences, consequently victimhood has been more frequently issued in democracies for the last few decades. Victimhood as a social and political construction of an identity, has converged with identity politics; and due to its collective aspect, it has gained salience and political relevancy in contemporary politics. For long, victimhood politics was considered as something belong to or originated in the left, however, it has been observed that discourses on victimhood has been increasingly employed by conservatives too in various societies and that multiple groups may use it simultaneously. Because, it has gained relevancy in politics and because victimhood may serve to provide a ground of ontological primacy in politics, it has become a matter of competition called as competitive victimhood. Many scholars problematized the competitive victimhood and the politics of resentment as undercutting political agency, although the search for political recognition is a clear sign of agency. In this thesis, I assess the concept of victimhood as a socio-politically constructed identity at the group level and as a changing social principle, despite the fact that victimhood and its politics may of course differ depending on its context, content, methods, practices, representation and so on... By emphasizing the importance to examine the aspects in which undercut of agency may occur as a possible danger in the politics of victimhood due to these differences, I try to understand the relevancy of the problematizations in the literature by seeking explanations in the political theory and I try to seek for methods to avoid such consequences that will also strengthen political actors.

In the second chapter, after examining the convergence of victimhood with identity, I have reviewed the problematizations about the politics of victimhood, competitive victimhood, and victimhood as a culture. And, I underlined that the examination and problematizations show that the salience of the politics of victimhood is not seen only in left politics but also in conservative ones, and in conflict societies. In the light of the literature review I could outline a number of functions and consequences that the politics of victimhood may have and lead with regard to the problem of agency. Accordingly, victimhood is not only a self-perception but also a social construction, and this self-perception is accompanied with collective understanding of victimhood. The shared sense of victimhood is accompanied with shared beliefs and cognitive frameworks about social relations and the contextualization of the victimhood. Thus, it indicates a process of group formation and it is a constituent of a social identity. (Turner et al. 1999; Bar-Tal et al. 2009) It can also be observed in the form of culture by forming a moral code as source of power in social relations. (Campbell and Manning 2018) The public acknowledgement of victimhood and the cause of suffering has become a “direct claim to moral authority”. (Furedi 1998, 81) And, due to its collective experience it is political. (Williams 2008, 80) It is important to understand the combination of cultural, social, and political aspects of victimhood in order to understand how it has gained importance as a source of political power. As long as it provides a moral, social, or cultural code it defines social relations, most of the time in binary oppositions, it generates a specific kind of political relations in which the actor (the victim) develop a self-understanding constituted by victimhood. (Horwitz 2018, 555)

The claims for political recognition and mobilization give actors political agency in the politics of victimhood. However, this agency may be undercut and negated because of some functions and consequences of victimhood in politics. The politics of victimhood as a search for political recognition is dependent on the political context and the necessities it shapes; reflects a political consciousness on a choice between politics of grievance or politics of resentment; is incorporated to broad ideological narratives; and forms mobilization to affect power distribution. (Jacoby 2015) Consequently, the degree of agency depends on these stages in the process of the search for political recognition. Although, victimhood can be overcome in the end, it becomes a challenge due to these stages in which the status of victim and victimhood as a political discourse could be used for political leverage, even though it may trap individuals to their victim identity. (Jacoby

2015) In this regard, besides of contesting to power, it could also be used to maintain power. Especially in conflict societies, it may prolong the conflict and intensify polarization. (Staub 2006; Bar-Tal et al. 2009)

Victimhood becomes a ground in which social relations and positions are defined. It may be accompanied with negative feelings such as resentment. In such a case, it could easily lead to retreat to safe spaces, conflict, polarization, partisanship, and violence. Its politics may result in differentiation (between perpetrator and victim) and superiority (of the victim). Because it gives a moral authority and an immunity from criticism (to avoid re-victimization), it could easily result in loss of self-critique, taking responsibility, and accountability. It could attribute a social ethos to the collective group and a telos for their cause by presenting a cognitive ground and an understanding of a certain truth. Due to the teleological understanding, it could legitimize utilitarian outlook in a progressive reading of politics. Furthermore, because it is incorporated with broad ideological narrative, it could single out a discourse on victimhood regardless of the individual differences and plurality of experiences and could produce vulgar narratives that would actually silence both victims and accused perpetrators. Consequently, the politics of victimhood brings out the dilemma of representation where the equal ground of politics and deliberation could be eliminated. In consequence of all these functions and possible consequences of the politics of victimhood, the agency of the actors would be weakened; most importantly, the possibility of becoming and envisioning a new future would be negated. The possibility to overcome victimhood by thinking of new solutions and values and by taking creative political action would be impeded. Although such dilemmas are not specific to the politics of victimhood and most of them (for example the impact of ideologies) can be observed in any other types of politics, it is important to lay out such effects in order to beware of the consequences that may threaten the struggle for justice itself. As of anything, victimhood discourses are also open to manipulation and misconduct. But this is specifically problematic because hitherto the policies have been produced and the rights have been gained become part of today's understanding of human rights owing to the struggles aimed to reveal and secure justice and to overcome victimhood.

In the third chapter, after clarifying the theoretical framework of Nietzsche, I made an analysis of the politics of victimhood especially in terms of its moral and cultural aspect

and I could explore the problem agency in the politics of victimhood. In Nietzschean terms, today's competitive victimhood can be considered as an expansion of slave morality which centralizes the feeling of resentment and seek for revenge. It creates an understanding of selflessness due to the attachment with the values and norms produced in a specific community, consequently, it may reinforce a culture of mass mediocrity and herd instinct. It is accompanied with a utilitarian outlook, a teleological understanding, and an ignorance about the *truth about the will to truth* which is actually *will to power* as a *will to freedom*. As of conventional understanding and modern ideologies, victimhood culture and its politics converged with identity politics reproduce understandings of 'conscience' and 'moral duty' which are inherently signs of slave morality; they present a weakness as a strength; they equalize the unequal things; and the dualistic reading of social relations on the basis of 'good' and 'evil' and of guilt nurtures the ascetism and utilitarian outlook that evaluates individuals on the basis of suffering. As of the others, it presents a theoretical ideal man: the victim. Also, it defines a 'truth' that is distinct from other truths and tends to perspective; knowing the truth becomes the virtue. In this regard, the ever-increasing contestation on the status of victim or the 'real victim' and defining this status as a virtue in today's competitive victimhood signal a fundamental motive of the slave morality. Furthermore, despite the claims of agency as part of politics of victimhood, the attribution of selflessness in a group morality and depictions of a singularized truth about the collective suffering undercut the possibilities of interpretation, the individual experience, and subjective evaluation. It detains individuals from self and life affirmation and revealing their differences.

Nietzsche would have agreed that the victim has become the symbol of the modern society. The democratic and progressive telos cannot guarantee a stage in the history that is for the victims to overcome their victimhood. Everything changes and becomes but it cannot be expected that it becomes something particular, as in the teleological understanding. As long as such a telos is defined for the politics of victimhood, it will undermine the agency of the victims. The politics of victimhood that is producing an ethos and a virtuous or ideal status of victim in the aim of contesting power will stand in the way of victims to reveal their agency, to create their own values through their own experiences. Eventually, this will perpetuate the degeneration of all man, the desert will continue to grow. Also, Nietzsche would not see representative democracy as a solution due to the inconvenience of the social contract theory that is presuming state as the true

will of the people; and would argue that democracy is a means for mass mediocre who convince themselves by lying about their strength to be able to pursue revenge in their invented fortune.

The politics of victimhood in the search for recognition may present a set of challenge to the normative system because it is part of a reason and responsible for the past injuries, consequently, this could mean the rejection of values, a constant skepticism towards the world as a passive nihilistic attitude. This is also problematic because on top of the group morality centered around resentment and equipped with the techniques of remembering, the nihilism aspect of victimhood culture and politics precludes the possibilities for creating new values, affirming life, and projecting to the future as free spirits. As it is seen, Nietzschean perspective presents us a solution that only starts at the individual level rather than at the group or social level; and the response to the question how the problem of agency in the politics of victimhood could be overcome lays on the ground of recognizing will to power, revaluation of all values, life affirmation, forgetfulness, and creative action in Nietzschean perspective. The claims on victimhood and call for recovery for the injustices are also signs of will to power. Because the problem about the politics of victimhood is not that it is a reflection of will to power but it is displayed through producing a moral understanding which is not productive and creative, the need is to equip this will to power with creative values. The recognition of the will to power may free actors from presenting victimhood as moral authority and from revengeful behaviors. Forgetfulness, not in the sense of total ignorance about the heavy past or tolerating the harm but in the sense of being able to project on future for better possibilities along with life-affirmation, would also be an important element to avoid from furthering conflict and to end it. Lastly, if actors re-evaluate their own values without depending on moral and social norms, it would mean creation of new values and basis for new actions to be taken to overcome victimhood as a sign of agency.

In the fourth chapter, after clarifying the theoretical framework of Arendt, I made an analysis of the politics of victimhood by questioning its political aspect in relation to identity and speech, so that I could explore the problem agency in the politics of victimhood. Arendt's political theory presents a set of different ways of understanding identity, politics, and freedom. In this sense, her theorization can be regarded as a criticism on today's politics of victimhood converged with identity politics. The politics

of victimhood, in which an identity based on victimhood is established, is limited in terms of reflecting the worldly reality truly and reliably and of reflecting political power that is of political action. It overlooks the characteristics of action and consequently does not give weight to the possible remedies for irreversibility and unpredictability. And, as long as the issues of suffering are contextualized merely on a moral basis and articulated around a shared conception of good, it cannot reveal political action that may begin something anew and become historical.

In Arendtian terms, identity is not a matter of religion, ethnic, or sexuality that works as a category involving groups of people, but it is what makes different and distinct a person from other due to the uniqueness of every individual. The only thing that is common among all humans is having this characteristic of uniqueness. Identity is a question of 'who are you' rather than 'what you are'. In public realm, the sphere of appearances where people exist among the plural human beings, one can come across with the question of 'who are you' rather than 'what you are' as a question constantly raised in the modern age in which animal laborans and what is social are predominant. Yet, identity can be revealed among plural human beings through action and speech because togetherness is the source of who we are. Hence, imagination and understanding always ramble among others enduringly, so that the source of meaning is always others, despite one is unique and one's identity corresponds to that uniqueness. Thus, the disclosure of identity in the political realm through speech and contingent action corresponds to agency. Because today victimhood has become a socially and politically constructed identity that is categorical and static, it does not really reflect identity and agency. Suffering cannot be considered as a basis or a definer of identity of an actor. Identity is neither a means over truth nor a basis for moral authority that would be articulated with reflections on guilt and pity. The politics of victimhood incorporated with broader ideologies cannot reflect political power because it would only mean reflection of indoctrination and moral duty which essentially preclude identity and agency in Arendtian terms.

Disclosure of identity in political realm among plural human beings through action and speech is the way to reflect world truly and reliably to judge for validity because realities and opinions differ, and they can be enhanced in the public sphere; consequently, it can free actors from thoughtlessness or banality in thinking. It is the way to yield the factual truth rather than rational or moral truths. In this regard, the politics of victimhood that is

becoming more and more wedged into vulgar ways of narrating the experiences of suffering is neither liberating nor accurate or efficient in terms of reflecting the worldly reality truly and reliably. Also, due to the dynamic nature of representative opinions emerging in the public sphere and contingency of political action, a teleological understanding cannot yield freedom. The absence of the political realm and political action disambiguates the politics of victimhood through the orientation and inducement of nonpolitical or anti-political forces; consequently, the politics of victimhood becomes more open to the influence of personal interest seeking rather than initiating something anew.

Active consent of citizens through direct participation and deliberation growing in civic engagement can yield collective action in Arendt's understanding of politics; unlike today's politics of victimhood which is unfolded in representative democracy and based on the presumptions that the consent is passive, and identity is static and categorical. Furthermore, the characteristics of action, irreversibility and unpredictability require *responsibility* and accountability at both individual and collective level. The faculties of promise (to keep one's identity) and forgiving are the remedies for the consequences of action and the possible ways of taking responsibility. Promise is a responsibility of one to keep his identity and forgiving is an effort to make a reconciliation between past and future to reveal the potentiality of political power in the political realm. Also, remembrance not as a matter of sedulousness that's only focus is retrospective and revenge, but as an imperative of thinking and action is part of taking responsibility to consider for possible consequences and to eliminate thoughtlessness.

Therefore, in the light of Arendt's theoretical framework, overcoming the problem of agency in the politics of victimhood and overcoming victimhood require: a political action arises from the human condition of plurality enabling each and every agent to reveal their distinct identity without reducing it to the victim status; being aware of irreversibility, unpredictability, and dynamic feature of the political action; refraining from revengeful acts and words for or against others in the public realm; refraining from seeking personal interest and detaching from any kind of indoctrination (either on moral or rational bases); taking the responsibility for political power by enhancing our thinking and imagination along with remembrance; and employing the faculties of promise and forgiving in order to last and advance the potential of the political power.

In the fifth chapter, after clarifying the theoretical framework of Foucault, I made an analysis of the politics of victimhood by taking it as relations of power that leads to subjection, so that I could explore the problem agency in the politics of victimhood. Foucault's analysis of power relations which focuses on the question of 'how' rather than 'why' brings a new perspective to point out the problem of agency in today's politics which is far more diffusive. Victimhood as a rising phenomenon in democracies and as a scape of modernity cannot be only regarded as progression due to the productive and repressive aspects of Power and to the totalizing and individualizing forms of governmentality. Because Foucault puts Power not necessarily bad or evil, but dangerous, his analysis underlines the dangers in the politics of victimhood which we consider as the problem of agency in this analysis. Victimhood as a social and political construction of identity is a process of subjectification in relations to normalization and discursive formation. The problem of agency is not only problematic because of the relations of power in politics as the politics of victimhood would formulate; but also because the politics of victimhood is part of the power relations that subjugates, normalizes, differentiates, totalizes, and treats individuals asymmetrically as techniques of power to invest in itself. Power relations necessitate a process of self-formation in which one becomes attached to the identity of victim, since its politics reproduces the knowledge and practices that creates a ground for recognition of the victimized individuals. In this regard, the politics of victimhood reflects relations of Power because everyone is subjected to Power and everyone reproduces knowledge that corresponds to Power; nevertheless, it can challenge to it and has the possibility to exhibit resistance with a strategy of struggle.

The technologies of Power, discipline, examination, panopticism, and surveillance may reflect itself in the politics of victimhood and make every individual a 'case' by defining small details, differences, and gaps in reference to the other. Individuals also perceive and make themselves as a 'case' and become tied and dependent on their own identity that is grounded on either conscience or self-knowledge in the course of self-governance. The politics of victimhood reproduces a normality and an elaboration of ethics that are relevant in terms of the knowledge it produces and it may attribute an abnormality to the categorized other and even dehumanize it because it does not fit to the normality and contradicts with the reasoning. Hence, the politics of victimhood as of other relations of

power, is based on the dividing practices that treat and consider individuals (either ingroup or intergroup) asymmetrically; and it may define binary oppositions between social forces. Furthermore, it is entangled with a discursive formation that mediates knowledge to organize social relations.

Victimhood converged with identity politics is articulated in broader narratives such as ideologies and victimhood as a basis of socially and political constructed identity may also reproduce the asymmetrical relations in society. It may present an identity of 'we' and take it that 'we' defined on the basis of victimhood as a starting point for political discussions. As long as the politics of victimhood employ polemics rather than problematization, it would undercut the agency of its actors because polemics are formed in ideological frameworks and indoctrinations that define a problem via an already articulated 'we' as a starting point by reinforcing a reading of social relations in binary oppositions and that repeat the vulgar uses and arguments as clichés rather than new ideas. This articulation of 'we' corresponds to an identity in which knowledge and individuals' experiences are reproduced by reduction in a normative and ideological framework. But, for Foucault 'we' can emerge in the aftermath of problematizations as in the struggles.

If the politics of victimhood aims for freedom in the modern sense that is an artefact of governmentality, then it would mean repetition in existing power relations. Because freedom is a practice that one can practice upon himself and is a possibility of self-creation rather than subjectification in Power relations in Foucauldian reading, one can practice freedom in the course of resistance to Power by the virtue of the capacity to act. Because wherever the Power is (which is everywhere) there is resistance, actors can gain agency by subverting the norms and dispositions articulated in power relations and by challenging subjectification processes manifested in the formation of an identity that is based on victimhood in the politics of victimhood. The potentiality and unpredictability of action may lead a practice of freedom on one's self within a resistance that escapes and tries to stand out of power relations and leads to a breakdown in identities individually without being absorbed in the totality but springing with the plurality since resistance also passes through everyone. By presenting a winning strategy, the politics of victimhood in form of a struggle may redefine power relations by appealing to the productive aspect of power relations since it would still be part of the power relations, and although it cannot abolish Power.

Especially in the cases of conflict societies “victims often develop unhealthy investments to their own victimhood, which Wendy Brown has described as ‘wounded attachments’” (Jacoby 2015, 529) Wendy Brown (1995) warns about the troubling aspects of identity politics in specific to the centralization of victimhood since people while investing in their identity on the basis of victimhood they invest “in their own subjection.” (Williams 2008, 89) But, most important of all, “the past cannot be redeemed unless that identity ceases to be invested in it, and it cannot cease to be invested in it without giving up its identity as such.” (Brown 1995, 73) In parallel to this point, Foucault’s resistance presents a way for actors to gain agency by struggling against Power relations and subjectification which is executed as objectification of subject in dividing practices, as the ways in which scientific status is given to the subjects via discursive formation, and as one’s turning oneself into subject via self-governance and depending on identity to the degree that one becomes trapped in his identity in the objectification of victimhood in politics.

I regard the theoretical frameworks of the three thinkers as complementary in terms of examining the problem agency in the politics of victimhood and related aspects of the problematizations. Despite they differ in terms of their analyses, there are five main themes among the three thinkers and they all present potential propositions to overcome victimhood and agency problem. First, their theories underline the necessity to detach from progressive and utilitarian outlooks. Teleological understanding of a culture or a mobilization cannot prevail because it rules out change, contingency, and possibilities for resistance. Second, they underline the necessity to be detached from the influence of morality and tradition or prophetic stances. A shared conceptualization of good or pity or a moral code or an ethics cannot be basis for action and freedom that would not undermine individual difference and experience. Third, they all criticize ideology and reading social relations in binary oppositions due to its consequence on a self-understanding based on a depiction of an ‘other’. Fourth, they all present a question on the possibilities for agency either in political terms or social and cultural terms. Nietzsche does it by accounting for individual interpretations, values, and actions that can be independent of conventional norms through one’s own conduct; Arendt does it by rising a new understanding of identity (which is unique for everyone) in the face of loss of the world and of meaning in the modern age; Foucault does it by remarking on the ways in which resistance may exist against subjectification processes in Power relations and may break given identities as to

avoid being trapped to one's own identity. Fifth, they all present a different understanding of freedom from the usual senses. For Nietzsche, it is the will to power and revaluation of all values; for Arendt, it is speech and action the political sphere among the plural human beings without facing any domination; for Foucault, it is one's practice on oneself while resisting to the repressive practices, deeds, and conducts articulated in every micro-physical realms of Power.

In conclusion, the theories present a set of possibilities for new and creative ideas and action that can enhance agency by avoiding simplifications and separation and by multiplying "the capacities of whomever to do, to say, or to think, instead of producing spectators" as Fernandez-Savater (2015) says, which I also regard as complementary. In Nietzsche's terms, the answer is to create new values that cannot be fixed but constantly challenged and renewed while affirming life with a projection on future at the individual level. In Arendt's terms, the answer is a contingency and non-oriented political action springing from public realm in which the condition of plurality enable actor to reveal their identities through speech. In line with Nietzsche's emphasis on prospective thinking, Arendt also emphasizes prospective thinking but in the face of Nietzsche's forgetfulness Arendt underlines the importance of remembrance not as recalling the past all the time but as a sign of thinking to eliminate thoughtlessness. Also, her remarks on the faculties of promise and forgiving for political action as remedies are crucial for securing agency; one signifies responsibility and accountability at the individual level and the other signifies them at the collective level. In Foucault's terms, the answer is to struggle against the repressive forms of power and challenge the relations of power appearing themselves in thinking, behaving, judging since the human capacity to act always involves possibilities for resistance. His theory, on building on Nietzsche's methodology, discloses the broader and more diffuse aspect of the problem as relations of knowledge and by accounting the human capacity to act as a basis for change, as Arendt does, it presents a bitter analysis to think of elevating human experience. As Ronsbo and Jensen (2014) noted that victimhood is a political construction because it "acquires materiality through contestation and technologies of self and population." (1-2) Thus, Foucauldian reading of power has let us to consider for the contestation and technologies of self and population, which is cross individual and collective levels.

Although Nietzsche's theoretical framework is more of a criticism on moralities, Arendt's is more of a criticism on the understanding of politics, and Foucault's is more of a criticism on the understanding of power and its relations with regard to knowledge, reading the politics of victimhood with their theories enabled us to think victimhood in politics that may enhance agency with different perspectives on truths and values, power, freedom, resistance, subject, and identity. Their theories enlightened the importance of action, becoming, and change as elevating agency and individual experience through re-considering self-perceptions and identities without holding on dualistic and simplistic thinking. Hence, the explanatory strength of the thinkers' theoretical frameworks does not only remain to generate criticisms but is enriched in terms of proposing new ways to overcome victimhood and of challenging the problem of agency. The suggestions made through their theoretical frameworks are not specific for the problem of agency in the politics of victimhood but can be applied for everyday politics. However, the analyses provide a comprehensive analysis both to examine diverse aspects of the politics of victimhood and to generate new perspectives that may strengthen actors in the course of their claims on victimhood and demands related to overcome it. The proposals may contribute to the reforming power of the struggles for justice.

As the final argument, I argue that the problem of agency in the politics of victimhood can be overcome by searching for the ways both to overcome victimhood and to enhance agency without reproducing victimhood as an identity to benefit from its political leverage; the ways are: re-evaluating all values regardless of the moral culture that victimhood itself produces by recognizing will to power and affirming life; revealing identity through speech and political action in the public realm by also taking responsibilities of remembrance, promise, and forgiving against future consequences of thoughtlessness; and resisting the repressive forms of power and normalization in every micro-physical realms of Power (and knowledge) by presenting a strategy. Victimhood as converged with identity today in politics is a process of subjectification (in Foucauldian sense) in which one become more and more trapped into his social identity in a static manner. But identity should be understood in Arendtian sense, so that we can regard it with its dynamic feature and without formalizing the social aspect in a constraining manner where indoctrinations and ideologies come into play. With such understanding of identity, agency would be enhanced. Also, through political action (in Arendtian approach) which is free from dominance and is contingent, victimhood can be overcome.

However, the cultural and moral aspects should not be disregarded, so, it urges for the individual effort to re-evaluate all values (in Nietzschean sense) in the meantime. As complementary to this, the political action which will bring something anew should be strengthened to perform resistance (in Foucauldian approach) to challenge existing power relations which are diffusive in the forms of knowledge and ethics constituting all human behavior and experience. Ultimately, creative political action springing in the public sphere, which is free from indoctrinations and not grounded in any ideologies accompanied with socio-politically constructed identity of victimhood, will not only break through competitive victimhood and provide a ground for participatory democracy but also enable actors to create new values about their victimhood in politics and enhance their agency through reflecting on and speaking of their own experience.

Deriving from the analyses and conclusions presented in this thesis, I believe there are two related subjects for future prospect. First, the problem of agency in the politics of victimhood may re-raise the question of “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (Spivak 1988) Because the questions about the intention of providing victims a voice and enabling them to overcome victimhood are parallel to questions about subalterns. Also considering Foucauldian analysis in this thesis regarding the production of knowledge corresponding to power relations, I believe Spivak’s question still stands. Furthermore, if we consider subaltern in Gramscian analysis (2014, 202), the application of the victimhood discourse may serve to conserve and secure the consent of the subaltern. This could also explain how victimhood is not only used in order not only to contest but also to maintain power. The discourse of victimhood that is used or adopted either by the dominant elite or the oppositions groups who could retain a substantive position in politics, carries the risk of cropping personal narratives and the experiences of victims for the sake of rhetorical power of the discourse in the political arena to integrate the subaltern into an ideological framework. In this regard, a fieldwork that searches for the effects of the politics of victimhood on subaltern groups might contribute to the literature in the future.

Second, victimhood may be articulated in populist rhetoric with the intention to secure and conserve consent and to generate a group identity formation to create and strengthen a political imagination that “brings into existence a symbolic and material sphere in politics, a place where actors can convey political and emotional messages that function to build trans-individual political bonds.” (Yılmaz 2017, 5) Gerodimos (2013), in his

analysis of the far left populism in Greece and the discourses that they employ on the basis of victimhood, argues that the emerging narrative that they produce is not only an indication of a coherent populist ideology but also a distinct populist identity equipped with victimhood and revenge that challenges the idea that populism is compatible with democracy. Jacoby (2015) in a theoretical analysis noted that victimhood occupies more of a place in democracies compared to the repressive states firstly because repressive states simply do not allow for a public voice and secondly despite victimization is less observed in democracies because democracies recognizes justice. I believe, these findings and arguments urge for questions that how victimhood plays a role in the recent forms of populism especially in democratic countries where victimhood may become a more prominent phenomenon; and that if the politics of victimhood has a role in the illiberal turn in advanced democracies with respect to the increasing application of populist discourses to diffuse political identity more effectively in the contemporary politics? In short, after elucidating the problem of agency in the politics of victimhood in thesis, I aim for studying the relationship between the increasing populist dispositions in representative democracy and the politics of victimhood in contemporary politics, in my doctorate study.

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