Let's briefly summarize what has been said so far. In discussing the first controversy over the definition of power (power to versus power over), we have sided with those power theorists who understand power as a social phenomenon of domination, potentially overcoming potential resistance, for reasons of argumentative strategy. Power, as we have stated with Weber, is what you have when and only if you have the chance to assert your will against the possible reluctance of others. In discussing the second controversy (commodity model versus structural model), we choose neither of the models, but argue for a combination of both approaches. Power, we have stated, occurs as an attribute of concrete persons and also as an impersonal social structure. How do these two findings fit together for a modern theory of power? In our estimation, the commodity model and the structural model of power decisively complement the Weberian concept of dominance. According to this, power is to be understood as the means available to concrete persons for the potential control of other persons AND as the potential of a social structure to control the behavior of the persons participating in it. From our perspective, it is crucial that Weber's power-over conception leaves a gap in relation to the position of the 'power-bearer'. It simply leaves unresolved whether this position is filled by a concrete person or group of people or by an impersonal or super-personal social structure. And the discussion of the controversy between representatives of the commodity model and the structural model has clearly shown that it can be filled by both.

1.2 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF POWER

After having discussed pivotal questions in our definitional approach, notably which phenomena fall under the concept of power and which do not, we now wish to clarify which logic patterns these phenomena are subject to and which basic principles apply to them. There is already an implicit assumption associated with this question, namely that there actually are fundamental principles of power at all. However, we also go one step further. We believe that is possible to develop a list of power principles that are universal and globally consistent, that is, independent of time and place. In other words, the basic principles of power are the same everywhere and at all times. Before listing them in detail, let us first make our assumption of the universality and global consistency of the principles of power plausible.

Our argument is summarized as follows: (a) The nature of power depends on the nature of humankind; (b) the essence of humankind is universal and globally uniform; (c) therefore, the essence of power – and thus its principles – is universal and globally consistent. The first premise of this conclusion can easily be made

plausible. Power, as we established in Chapter 1.1, is an irreducible social phenomenon that exists only in and through interacting relationships between people. Without people there is no power. Thus, the essence of power is inseparably connected with that of humankind. Accordingly, if there are no characteristics that are common to all people, no matter what time they come from and how they are socialized, then there are no universal principles of power. But if there are human characteristics that persist across all times and contexts, it suggests that the same applies to the logic of power.

That brings us to our second premise. The question of whether there is one kind of human nature has always been a bone of contention among historians, social scientists and philosophers. Until the late 1980s, the conception of critical theory and existentialism dominated the discourse to the extent that statements *about* humankind as such were deemed mere ideological constructs.[48] What a person is and what a person is not becomes, so the Marxist-inspired thesis, exclusively determined by changing economic conditions. Beyond that, there is no characteristic structure of human forms of action and life. This position has been contested in recent years, rightly so.

An important criticism comes from the realm of ethnology. The diversity of human life forms is immense, but nevertheless there are "features of culture, society, language, behavior, and mind that [...] are found among all peoples."[49] The list of these 'anthropological universals', which are determined by intercultural comparative research, is long. A well-documented example is the incest taboo, which applies without exception in all societies. Another universal is that of property, which, though in many variations, is a core element of the emergence of every human community. Such conspicuous universal structures can, so the thesis, exist only if there is an immutable essence of humankind. Otherwise they would be completely inexplicable.

Another criticism comes from philosophical anthropology in conjunction with biology. Here it is pointed out that the action, thinking, feeling, etc. of human beings is largely determined by their biological bodies and that this body has remained the same since the appearance of humankind about 300,000 years ago. A theoretician, who is currently experiencing a renaissance in this context, is the

48 Sartre, Jean-Paul ([1945] 2007): *Existentialism is a Humanism*, John Kulka (ed.), translated by Carol Macomber, New Haven: Yale University Press.

49 Cf. Brown, Donald E. (2004): Human Universals, Human Nature, Human Culture, *Daedalus,* 133 (4), pp. 47-54.

sociologist Arnold Gehlen.[50] Gehlen coined the basic concept of humans as 'deficient beings' with the explanation that, unlike animals, humans have not adapted to their natural environment. Humankind has no dense fur to offer protection from severe weather; no fangs or claws for defense against predators; and a far from good escape instinct. This deficit must be compensated for through cultural creations, from the simple construction of tools and houses to the creation of complex states.[51] Through the development of cultural techniques, bioethicist Jens Clausen adds, humans have not been able to overcome the threat of nature but have succeeded in reducing it.[52] All human social achievements – and thus also power relations – are ultimately only mechanisms for compensating for physical inadequacies. This circumstance, Gehlen concludes, is the essence of humankind. Insofar as this physical constitution is genetically determined, it is immutable and universal. Thus, human behavior, despite all superficial and cultural variance, always follows the same basic pattern.

To summarize again: if there is such a thing as a universal and globally consistent human nature, as we have said, it suggests that there are also universal and globally consistent logics of power – because the nature of power is inseparably linked to the nature of humankind. Since the findings of ethnology and biologically informed anthropology suggest that such a human nature exists, it follows that it is possible to compile a list of principles of power that apply everywhere and at any time. We will pursue this in the following. Our aim is not to derive an exhaustive listing from any higher principle or to prove rigorously each entry. Rather, our list is based on the reading of the scientific canon as a concept of power, on many years of political consulting experience, and not least on common sense.

(1) The Moral Neutrality of Power

Power has a bad reputation. And not only since the German rock group *Ton Steine Scherben* sang "No power for nobody!" in 1972, in keeping with the spirit of the 1968 student-fueled protest movement which had engulfed the world, encompass

50 Gehlen, Arnold ([1940] 1988): *Man, his Nature and Place in the World,* translated by Clare McMillan and Karl Pillemer (eds.), New York: Columbia University Press.

51 Cf. Heidegger, Martin (1953): *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays X,* translated and with an Introduction by William Lovitt, New York: Garland Publishing.

52 Cf. Clausen, Jens (2009): Man, Machine and in between, *Nature*, 457 (7233), pp. 1080-1081. See also Clausen, Jens (2006): Die Natur des Menschen: Geworden und gemacht. Anthropologische Überlegungen zum Enhancement, *Zeitschrift für medizinische Ethik,* 52, pp. 391-401.; p. 396.

ing the hippie subculture and the anarchistic 'Yippies' of the Youth International Party, among others. The 'modern' aversion towards power has somewhat older roots. "Now power is evil, whoever wields it" was the apodictical assertion of the cultural historian Jacob Burkhardt, made as early as the beginning of the twentieth century.[53] Indeed, Burkhardt equated the establishment of power to the commission of a crime. A similar view is held by Mikhail Bakunin, for whom power and oppression are synonymous.[54] Bernhard Taureck sums up this point of view, which is widespread not only among intellectuals, by asserting that one speaks of power as if it were a threat, as if it were "something evil."[55] There are three claims underlying this standpoint: acquiring power is always morally bad, exercising power is always morally bad and power is always intrinsically morally bad, whether it is used or not.

These three claims are wrong! Power in itself – that is our first principle – is neither good nor bad, but *morally neutral.* It acquires moral status only through its context. Its status thus depends on the specific question of who has how much power over whom in relation to what.

In other words, only this or that power can be morally good or bad, not power *sui generis.* What is the best way to prove our neutrality thesis? First of all, we should realize that there are only three logically possible answers to the question of the moral status of power itself. First, power in itself is always morally bad – that is the view of Burckhardt and Sartre. Second, power in itself is always morally good – which, to our knowledge, nobody has ever advocated. Third, power in itself is neither morally good nor bad – which is our thesis. There is no fourth possibility. Since nobody ever seriously supported the second thesis, we can focus on refuting the first thesis. This allows the correctness of the third thesis to be deduced.

A few examples suffice to refute the first thesis. Take the power of parents over their children. Unquestionably, parents, also loving and caring parents, have tremendous power over their offspring. This results from physical superiority, natural authority and children's need for assistance and guidance. Nevertheless, this power is – we can assume – usually used to the benefit of the children. The parents

53 Cf. Hinde, John R. (2000): *Jacob Burckhardt and the Crisis of Modernity,* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.; p. 122. See also Burkhardt, Jacob (2000): Aesthetik der bildenden Kunst, Über das Studium der Geschichte*,* in Peter Ganz (ed.), *Jacob Burckhardt Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe Vol. 10*, Munich: C.H. Beck.; p. 419.

54 Cf. Newman, Saul (2004): The Place of Power in Political Discourse, *International Political Science Review,* 25 (2), pp. 139-157.

55 Taureck, Bernhard (1983): *Die Zukunft der Macht. Ein philosophisch-politischer Essay,* Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.; p. 11.

hold them against their will when they want to run across a busy road; they exercise their authority when children wish to play video games rather than learn algebra; they speak a word of power when it is time to go to bed – and so on. The responsibility for raising and educating offspring requires the possession of power in a straightforward manner. If parents, thinking in this context of Weber, were unable to assert their interests against the opposition of their child, they could not fulfill their educational task. That, by the way, summarizes the whole dilemma of anti-authoritarian education. A similar case is that of the physician, for example. Consider, more specifically, a psychiatrist who commits his suicidal patient to a closed unit. The power of the psychiatrist is not based on physical superiority or natural authority, but on legal norms and social conventions regarding the protection of a person deemed to be *non compos mentis.* Nonetheless, it has a similar function as in the case of adolescent education: the control of an underage or otherwise vulnerable person for his or her own benefit. We do not want to claim that all power that parents have over children and medical doctors have over patients is good. There are, unfortunately, tyrannical fathers and mothers, as well as incompetent physicians, in abundance. That notwithstanding, it is still good – or better said a social good – that parents and physicians are generally in power relationships with those under their protection. Power is therefore not a moral evil here, but a condition for the functioning of general welfare and care relationships. Thus, the thesis that power is always evil, 'no matter who exercises it', is already invalidated at this point.

However, the thesis of power as a universal evil is not only wrong in relation to social conditions in which those subjugated to power are underage or *non compos mentis*. It is also wrong with regard to relationships between responsible people. One uncontroversial example is about soccer. Here, the referees have power over the game, in so far as they can send players from the field, award free kicks, invoke penalties and order extra time – even against the will of thousands of fans and million-dollar professional clubs. Still, it would be absurd to scourge the impartial power as a moral evil. Rather, it is a necessary condition for the fair course of the game and for the observance of the rules, which are constitutive for the game. Again, we do not argue that the power of any individual referee is automatically and inherently good. That would be naive, notably in the face of fraud scandals that repeatedly shake the soccer world internationally. Rather, the power of arbitrators is generally a good thing.

Some readers may reproach us, asserting that our examples are banal and exclude the really exciting questions, such as whether political power is good or bad. We respond with two remarks. Firstly, in this chapter, we are not concerned with

clarifying what the criteria of good or bad forms of power are.[56] We aim just to show that power in itself – understood as a generic term and not as concrete power in a specific context – is not a moral evil, but is morally neutral. And we do this through counterexamples in which the intuitive untenability of the thesis of the categorical wickedness of power becomes apparent. Secondly, our examples intentionally comprise everyday cases, as they are meant to show the omnipresence of the phenomenon of power in our daily lives and the unrealistic nature of the claim that power in all its facets is fundamentally evil.

(2) The Dialectical Relationship of Power to Freedom

Power and freedom, it seems, are antipodes. Where there is power, freedom must give way. And if we are truly free, then we are free only in so far as we are not subject to any power, because power always means the potential curtailment of our freedom of action.[57] Nevertheless, things are more complicated than this. The relationship between power and freedom is not a contrast, but rather – as our second principle – a *dialectical* relationship. That is, power and freedom condition *and* undermine each other. Their relation is one of objective and real contradiction.

To what extent do power and freedom condition each other? First of all, we can state that power presupposes freedom. We can only have power over entities that have autonomy and scope for action. We cannot *force or pressure* a stone or a tree – we can only work with or process such objects. In other words, the potential to subjugate a potentially reluctant will implies that an autonomous will exists first. Only when this potential for submission is realized and a free will is broken does power become force. But with that, it stops, as it were, to exist. This is most dramatically demonstrated by the example of the threat of deadly force. As long as we threaten to fatally shoot someone, we have power over them. We incentivize their free will to obey our orders by linking the alternative to obedience with the eradication of existence. Yet, as soon as we fulfill our threat, because those threatened refuse to voluntarily comply with our demands, our power over them expires.

56 We shall address this matter in Chapter 2.3.

57 This position is characteristic of the school of thought of political liberalism as represented by John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin and Claus Offe; cf. Rawls, John (1971): *A Theory of Justice,* Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.; and cf. Dworkin, Ronald (1977): *Taking Rights Seriously,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. For a discussion of the relationship between freedom and power from a liberalistic perspective, see Carter, Ian (2008): How are Power and Unfreedom Related?, in: Cécile Laborde and John W. Maynor (eds.), *Republicanism and Political Theory,* Malden/Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.; pp. 59-82.

The mortally wounded, formerly threatened person is now completely divested of our power by death. That is why it is apt when Niklas Luhmann refers to the exercise of physical violence as an expression of the failure – and not of the success – of power.[58]

At the same time, however, freedom also requires power. This is what Wolfgang Sofsky and Rainer Paris point out, noting that power extends the freedom of one person against another by protecting them from external attacks and helping the individual to maintain his or her own independence.[59] The component of freedom consists in being free from the arbitrariness of others, from threats of violence, from dependencies, etc. The political theorist Isaiah Berlin calls this aspect of freedom a *negative freedom*.[60] Freedom, in this understanding, is a social space of non-intervention around the individual person within which they can act autonomously and unaffected by the wishes and goals of others. The spectrum of activities thus protected ranges from the most trivial everyday activities, such as the decision to drink coffee black and sugar-free, to essential cultural rituals such as the practice of religion. The larger this space of non-intervention, the greater the freedom of the person. The smaller it is, the less the freedom – to the point where it is degraded to the mere preserve of others and all opportunities for autonomous action are lost. What is the foundation of this space? The simple answer is: power. Only when a person has the chance to assert his or her goals and interests against others can he or she assert this space of non-intervention and be, in Isaiah Berlin's terms, *negatively free.* Of course, this power to assert one's freedom does not have to lie *directly* with the individual themselves, for example in the sense of a Hobbesian anarchy in which everyone tries to accumulate as much power (physical strength, weapons, allies, resources, etc.) as possible so as not to fall prey to the arbitrariness of others. In a state with a monopoly of force, individuals have power, above all indirectly, insofar as they are holders of state-guaranteed rights that provide them with a space of non-intervention and in whose defense they can call public security forces. Nevertheless, it remains to be noted, without power – be it direct or indirect – individuals have no guarantee of their freedom.

Power presupposes freedom – and freedom, in turn, presupposes power. Both are mutually conditioning. This sounds almost too good to be true. And, of course, that is indeed the case. As we emphasized at the beginning, both are not just mu

58 Luhman, Niklas (1987): *Beiträge zur funktionalen Differenzierung der Gesellschaft,* Soziologische Aufklärung Vol. 4, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.; p. 119.

59 Sofsky, Wolfgang and Paris, Rainer (1994): *Figurationen sozialer Macht. Autorität – Stellvertretung – Koalition,* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.; p. 9.

60 Cf. Berlin, Isiah (1969): *Two Concepts of Liberty.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

tually conditioning, they also undermine each other. This can be well illustrated by Berlin's model of the non-intervention space. The larger the space within which a person can act on account of his or her direct or indirect power, the smaller the remaining space of freedom for others. Somewhat exaggerated, it can be said that the power-reinforced freedom of one means the bondage of the other. To its extreme, this idea unfolds in a dictatorship in which exactly one person – namely, the dictator – enjoys maximum negative freedom and, in return, all other persons, apart from a small power elite around the ruler perhaps, enjoy only minimal freedom or none at all. Power, inasmuch as it means an opportunity to control people, is always a threat to and a limitation on others' ability to act. If I am subject to the power of another, theoretically I can still choose not to obey his or her orders and bear the devastating consequences – even to the death penalty. This is what Sartre means by his idea of *radical freedom.*[61] However, in fact, this idea of radical freedom has little to do with what we commonly understand by the term. Because if certain options for action are associated with such devastating consequences that a rational person would choose them only under very few, special conditions, then they are *practically* deleted from my range of decisions. It remains true: my freedom of action is limited by the power of my fellow human beings, and the greater their power in relation to me, the more limited are my options for action.

This paradox that power and freedom condition and undermine each other can only be demonstrated. It is not solvable, but belongs to our basic constitution as social beings. We are left with the practical task of constantly and rationally weighing up and balancing between the two factors. However, the question of how to do this is no longer part of our list of basic principles of power. It falls into the field of applied political philosophy.

(3) The Omnipresence of Power

Power is omnipresent. That sounds like a dystopia of total control in the spirit of George Orwell or an outrageous conspiracy theory. Nevertheless, this misunderstanding of our third principle can be clarified right at the beginning. We are not saying that humans are subject to someone's power in all that they do or that all their actions are the result of being influenced by others or a super-personal social system. Rather, as Foucault states, power is omnipresent "not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces every

61 Cf. Sartre ([1945] 2007).

thing, but because it comes from everywhere."[62] In short, power does not include everything, but it can be found in every aspect of our social existence.[63]

Even this thesis seems hardly plausible, at first. It would seem that there are many areas in our lives where we interact as free and equal human beings and without ever exercising power over one another. Deep friendships come to mind, or love relationships. But this view is somewhat naive. It is related to the fact that we often do not perceive and thematize power in its banal, everyday appearances, but rather when it comes to the supposedly big issues: politics, economics, war. In fact, love relationships and partnerships are a good example of the emergence of power relations. Let's say our partner has taken it upon herself to invite her parents to our home. Her parents are nice people, but they have the nasty habit of constantly interfering in everything, giving advice without being asked and knowing better than you how to do something in the household. In short, they are not exactly ideal guests. Still, our partner is not interested in hearing about this from us, and after some back and forth, it starts to emerge – perhaps only in the subtext and not actually spoken – that she will sleep in the guest bed for the next few days if the visitors are not allowed to come. In this constellation, this is nothing less than a power relationship: our partner controls the resources – the withholding of closeness and tenderness – to enforce her will against our resistance.

Now, in and of itself, this example might not indicate much, except that love relationships are not a good candidate for a power-free social space. Nonetheless, it still may raise doubts as to whether there is such a thing as genuinely power-free spaces. So, let's try to generalize. In this respect, it helps to recall Weber's dictum that power refers to every chance to assert one's interests against the resistance of others, no matter what this opportunity is based on.[64] Two things matter here. First, there is no area of social existence in which people have no interests. Whether leisure, work, sexuality, friendship, sports, politics, science or art, with regard to each of these fields we have desires and goals that can clash with just as many but differently oriented wishes and goals of others. Given the presence of these interests, on the one hand, and the possibility of their frustration by conflicting interests, on the other hand, the practical necessity of power arises – that is, the chance to enforce one's interests against resistance, as it were. Secondly, that

62 Foucault ([1984] 1990): p. 93.

63 Popitz, Heinrich (1992): *Phänomene der Macht,* 2nd edition, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.; p. 15. See also Popitz, Heinrich (2017): *Phenomena of Power: Authority, Domination, and Violence*, Andreas Göttlich and Jochen Dreher (eds.), translated by Gianfranco Poggi, New York: Columbia University Press.; p. 6.

64 Cf. Weber ([1921] 1978).

same chance, as Weber aptly states, can be based on every means imaginable. Above, we have already mentioned the withholding of closeness and tenderness. Other everyday examples include: the bad conscience which we impose upon friends if they do not come to a party; the praise we can give or withhold from employees, depending on how they do their job; the tip that we can pay a waiter, or not, depending on whether we are satisfied with the service. The examples can be continued endlessly. Everything can be used as a means of establishing power resources. In short, because, firstly, there is a need to acquire power in all areas of life and, second, because everything can be used as a means of power, power must be manifested in all areas of life. People have a natural inclination to realize their interests (hence their interests), and consequently they have a natural inclination to seize the resources necessary for their realization.

To be clear, we are not cynics who believe that humans enforce all their interests through power, and we also do not believe that all social relationships are always and exclusively power relations.[65] Such an extreme position is just as implausible as the belief in genuinely power-free social spaces. People also realize their interests by modifying the colliding interests of others with good arguments and establishing a rational agreement. And they are inclined to give up their own goals and wishes with just as much regularity, if other people can give them good reasons for doing so. The realization of interests through power is only one component of our social relations. However, it is nonetheless ubiquitous, as the above reasoning has indicated.

(4) The Natural Aspiration of Humankind for the Expansion and Intensification of Power

Human beings tend to expand and intensify their power. That is our fourth basic principle. There may be exceptions to this general principle, but nevertheless striving for power is a general anthropological fact. There are three reasons for this. The German historian Friedrich Meinecke eloquently, if in somewhat archaic language, addresses the first reason: “The striving for power is an aboriginal human impulse, perhaps even an animal impulse, which blindly snatches at everything around until it comes up against some external barriers. And, in the case of men at least, the impulse is not restricted solely to what is necessary for life and health. Man takes a wholehearted pleasure in power itself and, through it, in himself and

65 Such a pessimistic view is maintained by Hobbes ([1651] 1997).

his heightened personality."[66] Thus, that which drives human beings to acquire, expand and fortify power is initially nothing other than the desire for power itself. Of course, Meinecke was not the first observer to gain this insight. It can already be found in the annals of Tacitus, who recognized the significance of power as a stimulant par excellence, as the very mainspring of the Roman Empire.[67] But it is not just that we regard power as intrinsically pleasurable, that is, as pleasurable independent of its relation to other pleasurable goods. Friedrich Nietzsche points out that people feel great displeasure in powerlessness and experience the lack of power as something intrinsically painful.[68] As we strive not only to increase our pleasure, but also to avoid suffering, we have a twofold motivational reason to accumulate power.

People, however, also seek power because it is useful, and not just for the direct enforcement of interests. Power means social status. For example, Weber states that the pursuit of power is often conditioned by the "social 'honor' it brings."[69] The powerful are admired, respected, loved, feared. They experience anticipatory obedience without ever having to use their power – and those who hope to benefit from their power seek their proximity.[70]

That power is indispensable in order to enforce one's interests against conflicting interests in all areas of life has already been emphasized in the discussion of the third basic principle. At this point, however, it is worth pointing out that from this perspective, maximizing power is the only instrumentally rational option. Hobbes, more than just about any other political theorist, has pointed to this fact with great clarity and ruthlessness. Humans, according to Hobbes, cannot help striving for more power, because they cannot secure their present power and fortify the means to attaining and maintaining a pleasant life without the acquisition

66 Meinecke, Friedrich ([1957] 1998): *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison D'État and Its Place in Modern History,* translated by Douglas Scott, introduction by Werner Stark, New Brunswick, N.J. : Transaction Publishers.; p. 4.

67 Tacitus, Cornelius (1996): *The Annals of Imperial Rome,* translated by Michael Grant (ed.), London: Penguin.

68 See Nietzsche, Friedrich ([1844-1845] 1968): *The Will to Power,* translated by Walter Kaufmann and Reginald J. Hollingdale (eds.), New York: Vintage Books.

69 Weber ([1921] 1978): p. 386; see also p. 539.

70 According to Heinrich Popitz, this indeed represents a decisive characteristic of authoritative power. Cf. Popitz (1992): p. 29. Furthermore, Chapter 2.1 offers an in-depth assessment.

of additional power.[71] Behind this consideration is the idea that people, when they are content with a certain, limited amount of resources, run the risk of being supplanted by others. The constant threat to personal action spaces and standards of living sets in motion a race for power in which all actors seek to maximize their power resources. Now, let's point out that Hobbes limits this dictum to an anarchic state of nature and sees the race for power as preferably culminating with the establishment of a state. Nevertheless, such a restriction ignores the fact that even within a state community that guarantees us specific legal protection we can – and must – compete for power, ideally not with armed force but by virtue of economic, cultural and political means. Still, the competition for power, thus our sobering interim conclusion, is not actually over with the establishment of the state. No, not at all – the competition simply acquires rules governing – and ostensibly guaranteeing – its furtherance.

(5) The Basis of Power in the Vulnerability and the Neediness of Humankind

From an anthropological perspective, power has two universal roots: humankind's vulnerability and neediness. Popitz addresses the first root of power by stating that people can exercise power over others because they can hurt others.[72] As we have already emphasized in the discussion of Gehlen's anthropology, humans have no natural defense mechanisms, which renders them especially open to physical attacks. The possibilities for injury, and the imagination with which people have cultivated their development, are almost limitless. The human body can be hurt, tortured, mutilated and killed. The superior ability of one to injure another – whether through greater physical strength, agility, practice, weapons or cunning – gives rise to power over the other person. The credible threat of bodily injury allows the enforcement of one person's will against the other's resistance. If people were not defined by this characteristic vulnerability, they would be powerless in the truest sense of the word. They would not have to be afraid of experiencing

71 Concretely, Hobbes ([1651] 1997: p. 80) notes: "[...] in the first place, I put forth a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death. And the cause of this, is not always that a man hopes for a more intense delight, than he has already attained to; or that he cannot be content with a moderate power: but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more".

72 Literally: "*Menschen können über andere Macht ausüben, weil sie andere verletzen können".* Popitz (1992): p. 25.

physical suffering or of their existence being wiped out, and they would not be forced to bow to the will of another.

The second root of power is that human beings are driven in their thoughts and actions by innumerable needs that others can use to exercise power against them. The spectrum ranges from basic needs for food and sleep to cultivated inclinations towards fine wines, expensive drugs or exquisite art. Common to all of these needs is that their fulfillment is conducive or even essential to the well-being of the person concerned, and that their frustration, depending on the intensity of the need, can result in grave suffering. The more needs a person has, the more diverse is the potential gain in pleasure, but also the dependence on others who can deny them. In short, people's neediness places them in the power of others. The Greek and Roman Stoics already became aware of the fatal connection between power and need in pre-Christian times. According to this school of thought, the key to bliss – the so-called *Eudaimonia* – lies in the virtue of modesty and detachment from one's own needs. Only if we give up our inclinations and focus on asceticism can we escape dependency on others and live an autonomous life. Meanwhile, contemporaries of the Stoics like the ethicist Epicurus pointed out the self-abasement and rejection of pleasure involved in such an approach to life. Epicurus doubted whether a self-sufficient but joyless life is worth living at all. Besides, there are certain basic needs that we just cannot shake off – like food. Thus, even the ascetic can still be threatened with the deprivation of means of subsistence and be forced to submit to the will of another. In conclusion, we can say that by minimizing our needs we can strive to assert our independence from the power of others – but each one of us remains, just by virtue of our basic human needs, subject to power.

(6) The Purposive Production of Power

Power relations are not a natural phenomenon such as, for example, the law of gravity. They are instead – according to our fifth principle – cultural artifacts, which arise through purposeful human action and can also be destroyed or changed again. The sociologist Henrich Popitz asserts that the belief that power arrangements are the products of human agency was already one of the cornerstones of the Greek *polis*.[73] There, for the first time in the history of civilization, the political order of human coexistence was regarded as being configurable, changeable – and was not understood as something God-given or inviolable.[74] Plato's *Politeia* is exemplary for this in that his objective here is to develop the

73 Popitz (1992): p. 12., with original accentuation: "*Glaube an die* Machbarkeit *von Machtordnungen".* See also Popitz (2017): p. 3.

74 Popitz (1992): p.12.

principles of a just social order and use them as a critical standard of assessment for existing conditions.[75] Only if one assumes that the distribution and organization of power is something that can be changed on the basis of rational insight, does it makes sense at all to advocate a better order of power. The political core concept of the reform and its more radical equivalent, the revolution, thus directly presuppose that power arrangements are 'made'.

At the same time, the purposive production of power results in the categorical obligation to justify it. If power relations between individuals are not God-given or ordained by nature but are configurable, they must, so Popitz, also be justified in the light of the reasonable interests of the persons concerned. This conviction, which has shaped our thinking about power since antiquity, finds its clearest expression in the classical contract theory of political philosophy. The argumentative starting point is that any social power relations are justified only if they are affirmed in a hypothetical decision scenario by a group of free and equal persons. First, because power is made by human beings, and secondly because it must serve the people's well-being. It thus follows that it must have its normative foundation in the (at least hypothetical) consent of these people. Since the heyday of contract theory in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, our faith in and enthusiasm for the limitless configurability of just orders of power have clearly diminished, in particular thanks to the great machinations and power experiments of utopian state systems such as realist socialism. Nevertheless, Popitz maintains that the certainty of being able to do things differently, to do things better, is not affected by this.[76] The scope of what is feasible may be more limited than the pioneers of political theory would presume. However, this does not change the fact that power is made and can be made differently and better.

(7) The Institutionalization of Power

Because power is purposively produced, it can not only be amassed by individuals or groups, but also institutionalized. This is our seventh basic principle. Power has, in other words, the potential for consolidation in the form of social structures – ranging from ritualized dependencies between individual rulers and their subordinates to the establishment of complex state power structures. According to Popitz, three institutionalization tendencies or lines of development can be identified: depersonalization, formalization and integration.

75 Plato (2006): *The Republic,* translated by R.E. Allen (ed.), New Haven: Yale University Press.

76 Popitz (1992): p. 15.

With the concept of *depersonalization,* Popitz understands power as being detached from a concrete person and transferred to an abstract social position. That is to say, an individual only holds power in this configuration if he or she has a certain position or office recognized by the members of the group. The individual's power ceases when he or she leaves the position or is forced to resign. Such offices and positions have – and this is of particular importance – no proper names registered to them, but by definition are open to the person who can fill them.

Formalization, on the other hand, refers to the detachment of power from the arbitrariness of an individual person or group in favor of a regulation of the use of that power. Formalized power relations are characterized by a dense network of standards of action and competence. These not only determine who has power over whom in relation to what, but also provide sanctions for those who use or extend their power beyond the established rules.

Finally, the *integration* of power refers to the situation whereby the exercising, distribution and accumulation of power become part of an overarching social order, thereby experiencing legitimate institutionalization and consolidation. It thus becomes an integral part of a political doctrine and a social model encompassing the most diverse areas of society.

For all three elements, the stronger they manifest themselves, the more institutionalized is power. And as the institutionalization of power increases, so does its reach, effectiveness, and constancy. Depersonalization, formalization and integration, as the sociologist Peter Imbusch notes, bring about an increase in stability and thus also a safeguarding of power which is consolidated in the institutionalization process and correspondingly difficult to undo.[77] In short, institutionalized power is not only characterized by being linked to a greater chance of successful enforcement and to a larger group of people than non-institutionalized power. It is also – once it has been established – very difficult to abolish.

How the degree of institutionalization of power can be exactly quantified or even just classified is a notoriously difficult question. Popitz proposes five levels that allow a general classification. The first stage is that of *sporadic power*. This is limited to an individual case, the repetition of which is not expected. Sporadic power manifests itself in a series of actions – often violent ones – that can be coordinated but are not aimed at establishing inter-temporal power relations. A striking historical example is provided by the raids of the unified Mongol tribes

77 Imbusch, Peter (2007): Macht: Dimensionen und Perspektiven eines Phänomens, in: Klaus-Dieter Altmeppen, Thomas Hanitzsch, and Carsten Schlüter (eds.), *Journalismustheorie: Next Generation. Soziologische Grundlegung und theoretische Innovation*, Wiesbaden: Springer, pp. 395-419.; p. 410.

under Genghis Khan in Eastern Europe in 1220.[78] The Mongol cavalry offered the European princes a show of power beyond compare, using tactical agility and superior bows and arrows to decimate the armies of knights and then murdering and plundering their way through the countryside. But Khan's hordes never expanded their power in Eastern Europe in the form of depersonalized and formalized social structures, preferring to return to Central Asia after their successful forays.

The second level of institutionalization is that of *normative power.* Compared to the first stage, it distinguishes itself by the fact that the ruler deliberately normalizes the behavior of the power-subjects, thus subjecting them to rules of action that are effective in the most diverse spheres of life, such as the economy, religion or sexuality. This allows the ruler to enforce behavioral regularities that persist even when those under power are not exposed to any acute threat of violence. Individual behavior becomes predictable. At this stage, deference has become normatively consolidated.[79] The advantage for the ruler is obvious. If there are codified and universally recognized rules of behavior, then the effort required to control behavior is much less than if the ruler always needs to issue new commands. The standardization of power therefore conforms to the requirements of efficiency. Paradigmatic for this stage of power institutionalization are the early stages of colonization by expanding states – be it the Roman Empire or the European nation states of modern times. They all share the goal of not only economically exploiting a conquered territory in the short term, like the armies of Genghis Khan, but of efficiently controlling it over the long term. For this purpose, normative power and the associated standards are indispensable.

The third and, according to Imbusch's assessment, most important stage is that of the *positioning of power.* It marks the transition from merely socially consolidated power to actual rule. Characteristic of this stage is the establishment of "supra-personal superiority."[80] Of relevance here are the aforementioned social positions – offices – with which concrete powers and competencies are linked but whose concrete owners are interchangeable. Positionalized power that is decoupled from the individual person allows rulers to determine successors and deputies, and thus to extend the continued existence of power beyond their deaths. The advantage of this level of institutionalization lies in its continuity and stability. Its historical roots are undoubtedly located in the institution of dynastic succession. In this case a person, as a member of a noble family, inherits the office of the

78 Cf. Marshall, Robert (1993): *Storm from the East. From Ghengis Khan to Khubilai Khan,* Berkeley: University of California Press.; pp. 90-117.

79 Popitz (1992): p. 44. Literally: *"[… Fügsamkeit normativ verfestigt]".*

80 Popitz (2017): p. 95.

previous monarch, thus preserving the order of power. The seemingly paradoxical slogan "The king is dead, long live the king" expresses the basic principle of positionalized power like no other.

The fourth stage is characterized by the emergence of *positional structures of domination* or, less technically speaking, power apparatuses. At this stage, social positions are formed around the institution of the ruler; these in turn have independent powers of authority and control. On the one hand, this structure enables a form of division of labor in which the various public officials can specialize in specific fields of power, such as the military, economy, religion or politics.[81] This will further increase the efficiency gained through the normalization of power. On the other hand, it also ensures reciprocal control of the different social positions and, if necessary, the exchange of office-holders, if these prove to be incompetent. With *state rule,* the fifth and final stage of the institutionalization of power has been reached. Here a power apparatus – that is, a specialized structure of powerful social positions held by concrete persons – has succeeded in enforcing "monopoly claims on a demarcated territory, which extend to all three classical normative functions: legislation (legal norm), jurisdiction (monopolies over sanctions) and execution of norms (including the monopoly of violence)."[82] These central state functions do not have to be distinguished from one another in the form of a traditional, triplex separation of powers. They can also be gathered in the hands of a technocratic party elite or a clerical caste. Crucially however, the only significant difference between state rule and all other forms of institutionalized power is the unrivaled and successful claim to the performance of these functions by a power apparatus. This routinization of centralized territorial domination, as Popitz notes, creates considerable social constraints for the individual.[83] On the other hand, however, it also provides those ordering functions that are indispensable to our modern existence.

This concludes our listing of the principles of power. We have determined which logic the general phenomenon of power follows and which universal laws it is subject to or, in short, how power works. However, the question remains as to what consequences arise from these insights for us as human beings. We will now turn to this topic.

81 See Chapter 2.2 for more in-depth coverage of the power field.

82 Popitz (2017): p. 184.

83 Popitz (1992): p. 64.