# Marx K

## Link

#### Calls for Resurrecting the right to strike rely upon a mis-understanding of the nature of contemporary and historic labor rights. This romanticization of WW2 labor politics ultimately leads leftist politics towards a reconciliatory response to liberal governance. Only by refusing the terms of liberal respectability politics can we collectively produce a labor movement that can topple the structures of capitalist alienation.

White 2018 (Ahmed White, Its Own Dubious Battle: The Impossible Defense of an Effective Right to Strike, Wisconsin Law Review,2018 Wis. L. Rev. 1065 (2018), 1071-1073)//NotJacob

Those who call for resurrecting the right to strike contend[s] that the flourishing of strike militancy reflected, if not the inherent politics of the original Wagner Act before it was “de-radicalized,” then at least its potential. To be sure, it is clear that the Wagner Act was a remarkable document which did more to advance workers’ rights than any statute in American history; and it was at least ambiguous on the question of the legal status of strike militancy. But what seemed like its support for worker militancy was not a product of any particular potential. Rather, it was a reflection of the difficulty that judges, legislators, and other authorities, who dedicated themselves to restraining these strikes even as they flourished, encountered in prosecuting these values amid the unique economic and political conditions of the 1930s and 1940s. These obstructive conditions were quite temporary, though, and the authorities’ efforts culminated soon enough in the near-categorical prohibition of the tactics that had made strikes so effective. It is in this way that the history of strikes shows less in the way of de-radicalization than an encounter with the unyielding outer boundaries of what labor protest and labor rights can be in liberal society. As this all played out, it left in its wake a right to strike, but one whose power consists almost entirely of the ability of workers to pressure employers by withholding labor, while also maybe publicizing the workers’ issues and bolstering their morale. But while publicity and morale are not irrelevant, in the end they are not effective weapons in their own right. Nor are they generally advanced when strikes are broken. Moreover, the withholding of labor, unless it could be managed on a very large scale—something the law also tends to prohibit by its restrictions on secondary boycotts, by barring sympathy strikes and general strikes—is inherently ineffective in all but a small number of cases where workers remain irreplaceable. Of course, striking in such a conventional way accords with liberal notions of property and social order; but precisely because of this it is simply not coercive enough to be effective. And it is bound to remain ineffective, particularly in a context where workers far outnumber decent jobs, where mechanization and automation have steadily eaten away at the centrality of skill, where the perils that employers face in the course of labor disputes are as impersonal as the risks to workers are not, where employers wield overwhelming advantages in wealth and power over workers, where the state’s machinery for enforcing property rights and social order have never been more potent—where, in fact, capital is capital and workers are workers. From this perspective, the quest for an effective right to strike emerges as a fantasy—an appealing fantasy for many, but a fantasy no less, steeped in a misplaced and exaggerated faith in the law and a misreading of the class politics of modern liberalism. The campaign to resurrect such a right appears, too, not only as a dead-end and a distraction, but an undertaking that risks blinding those who support viable unionism and the interests of the working class to the more important and fundamental fact that liberalism and the legal system are, in the end, antithetical to a meaningful system of labor rights. It is for this reason that the call for an effective right to strike should be set aside in favor of more direct endorsement of militancy and a turn away from the law and instead towards a political program that might advance the interests of the working class regardless of what the law might hold.

## Link

#### In fact – the affirmative’s romanticization of the strike without understanding the cooptation of the right to strike is empirically wrong. A right to strike does not prevent permanent replacement of striking workers, nor the criminalization of coercive strikes tactics for being too “violent!” Let’s stop repeating the mistakes of the last 40 years of labor politics and instead imagine alternative political horizons for liberation.

White 2018 (Ahmed White, Its Own Dubious Battle: The Impossible Defense of an Effective Right to Strike, Wisconsin Law Review,2018 Wis. L. Rev. 1065 (2018), 1127-1131)//NotJacob

One of the outstanding ironies in a story rich with many is that the very things which made the prospect of an effective right to strike seem for a time so viable—the unlawful, illiberal, and altogether intolerable coerciveness of sit-down strike and mass picketing, especially—are also what made this concept impossible to ever realize. As we have seen, effective strikes could build the labor movement, validate the Wagner Act, secure the New Deal, and in many ways change America. But they could not make themselves legitimate. So it is that workers have found themselves with a right to strike that equals little more than a right to quit work—and maybe lose their jobs or their houses and savings in the balance. They have a right to strike, as Steinbeck’s character, Mac, complained, but they “can’t picket”—at least, not in a way that is really apt to change anything. And so they do not strike—in fact, under these circumstances they usually should not strike. The proof of this is readily evident, not only in the dramatic decrease in strikes since the 1970s, but in the sad regularity with which even the most vibrant strikes have ended in defeat for workers. Phelps Dodge (1983), Greyhound (1983 and 1990), Hormel (1985-1986), Caterpillar (1992, 1993, and 1994-1995), Detroit Daily News/Daily Free Press (1995-1997)—these are but the most notable of a litany of vibrant strikes since the 1970s that ended in failure.306 They are, in fact, the definitive labor struggles of this period, overshadowing a much smaller number of comparable disputes, like the strikes at United Parcel Service in 1997 and Verizon in 2016 that—often shaped by uniquely favorable labor dynamics—ended in something resembling victory for the union.307 Each of these big and unsuccessful strikes was motived by very modest, in fact anti-concessionary, goals and well-supported by workers and the larger public alike. And each featured mass picketing and other attempts at militancy. But these tactics were met with injunctions, civil suits, mass arrests, and criminal prosecutions, which ended the protests and left the employers free to exert their vast advantages in material wealth and political power, end the disputes on their terms, and leave thousands of strikers unemployed.308 It is true that the last year or so has witnessed what many people have declared to be a miniature strike wave, that has been widely celebrated by unionists and their allies as a welcome departure from past trends and portent, many hope, of a sustained resurgence of labor activism.309 Headlined by statewide teachers strikes in West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Arizona, all in the first part of 2018, the strikes commanded a great deal of media coverage, at least compared to what labor disputes usually receive nowadays.310 However, closer inspection suggests that this wave is mainly an artifact of wishful thinking exacerbated by the novelty for many people nowadays of seeing these strikes reported in the media. For in fact, the number of strikes over the last couple of years has remained close to the level that has prevailed for several decades now.311 Perhaps more significant in putting these strikes in proper context is a reflection on their character. None have been organizing strikes. All of these strikes have been over contracts and working conditions, with many driven by workers’ opposition to concessions and ended with less than spectacular gains by the strikers.312 Moreover, the strikes which comprise this supposed wave have been disproportionately mounted by government workers—teachers, mainly—who are not covered by the National Labor Relations Act. For this reason, several of the strikes have been unlawful, as state law typically denies such workers the right to strike anyway. But at the same time—and this may be the most crucial point—none of these strikes has unfolded in an especially militant way, at least by historical standards. There have been no big sit-down strikes, no threatening episodes of mass picketing, no routing of “scabs,” no destruction of property. Which is all to say that the kinds of strikes that built the labor movement eighty or more years ago remain thoroughly in check. There is little hope within the prevailing political and juridical order that things could ever be any different. Perhaps the right to strike could be made effective if it were fundamentally reconfigured in illiberal, corporatist terms. The right could conceivably be reconfigured such that the government might intervene more aggressively and make the workers protests effective—for example, stepping in to decide by adjudication, mediation, or arbitration which side should win a strike. Elements of this approach, which was vigorously opposed by IWW and AFL unionists alike in the early twentieth century, can be found internationally, in industry-specific statutes like the Railway Labor Act, and in labor statutes that apply to government workers, although most often when the law goes down this path it all but dispenses with the right to strike anyway, treating it as a redundancy, a tool without a purpose. As Senator Wagner himself perceived, alignment between the excessive reliance on the authority of the state to manage labor relations and the denigration of the right to strike was both dysfunctional and dangerous. As he put it back in the summer of 1937, defending the recently-passed statute that bore his name and the right that he placed at the center of it, [t]he outlawry of the right to strike is a natural concomitant of authoritarian governments. It occurs only when a government is willing to assume definitive responsibility for prescribing every element in the industrial relationship—the length of the day, the size of the wage, the terms and conditions of work.313 Clearly no such regime will be instituted in any event, not least because, as interest in such schemes in the twentieth century makes clear, support for this kind of corporatist intervention in labor disputes has itself been an elite reaction against strike militancy that currently does not exist. Where does this leave workers and unions, possessed of a right they cannot afford to surrender but cannot rely on as a means of advancing their interests and standing in society? Are they bound like Steinbeck’s strikers to meet defeat, albeit in a more peaceful way? Maybe. In one of his many commentaries on the sit-down strikes as they raged across the country in the spring of 1937, Walter Lippmann took time to analyze one of the speeches in which James Landis had argued that the tactic might well become a new right, in the same way that the right to strike in general had been created through its persistent assertion in the face of opposition and incredulity. No revolutionary, Lippmann nonetheless understood what Landis apparently did not: that the right Landis spoke of was revolutionary in its conception, and therefore not just an impracticality but a contradiction. “Never in the history of the law has rebellion been made lawful. Only the rights demanded by the rebels have been legalized,” said Lippman.314 As the labor scholars who call for the restoration of an effective right to strike have all understood, the tactics that made such strikes possible were tolerated only so long as there was not a functional system of labor rights in place, one that could stand alone in courts and hearing rooms. Once this was the case—once the rebel unionists’ aims, or at least those imputed to them, were realized—the sit-down strikes were predictably banned, and then so were mass picketing, secondary boycotts, and so forth. Thus it is that in cases like Fansteel and the debates on Taft-Hartley, sit-down strikers, mass picketers, and the like were presented as enemies of the labor law. Even more recent attacks on the right to strike, such as complaints in the 1980s about union violence going uncensored and the modest moves by the NLRB to rein in this, too, have been inevitably justified not in terms of overthrowing the system of labor rights but managing it, reconciling its virtues with the normative and juridical mandates of liberal society. And so it is that the right to strike—the right to an effective strike—has been sacrificed not in the name of capitalist hegemony but on liberalism’s altar of labor peace. Unfortunately, so far as the interests of workers go, these are the same thing.

## Impact

#### The impact to this is the reproduction and sedimentation of capitalism! Capitalism ensures extinction through war and climate change

Robinson 2016 (William I, PhD, professor of sociology, global studies and Latin American studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/35596-sadistic-capitalism-six-urgent-matters-for-humanity-in-global-crisis>)

In these mean streets of globalized capitalism in crisis, it has become profitable to turn poverty and inequality into a tourist attraction. The South African Emoya Luxury Hotel and Spa company has made a glamorized spectacle of it. The resort recently advertised an opportunity for tourists to stay "in our unique Shanty Town ... and experience traditional township living within a safe private game reserve environment." A cluster of simulated shanties outside of Bloemfontein that the company has constructed "is ideal for team building, braais, bachelors [parties], theme parties and an experience of a lifetime," read the ad. The luxury accommodations, made to appear from the outside as shacks, featured paraffin lamps, candles, a battery-operated radio, an outside toilet, a drum and fireplace for cooking, as well as under-floor heating, air conditioning and wireless internet access. A well-dressed, young white couple is pictured embracing in a field with the corrugated tin shanties in the background. The only thing missing in this fantasy world of sanitized space and glamorized poverty was the people themselves living in poverty. Escalating inequalities fuel capitalism's chronic problem of over-accumulation. The "luxury shanty town" in South Africa is a fitting metaphor for global capitalism as a whole. Faced with a stagnant global economy, elites have managed to turn war, structural violence and inequality into opportunities for capital, pleasure and entertainment. It is hard not to conclude that unchecked capitalism has become what I term "sadistic capitalism," in which the suffering and deprivation generated by capitalism become a source of aesthetic pleasure, leisure and entertainment for others. I recently had the opportunity to travel through several countries in Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa, East Asia and throughout North America. I was on sabbatical to research what the global crisis looks like on the ground around the world. Everywhere I went, social polarization and political tensions have reached explosive dimensions. Where is the crisis headed, what are the possible outcomes and what does it tell us about global capitalism and resistance? This crisis is not like earlier structural crises of world capitalism, such as in the 1930s or 1970s. This one is fast becoming systemic. The crisis of humanity shares aspects of earlier structural crises of world capitalism, but there are six novel, interrelated dimensions to the current moment that I highlight here, in broad strokes, as the "big picture" context in which countries and peoples around the world are experiencing a descent into chaos and uncertainty. 1) The level of global social polarization and inequality is unprecedented in the face of out-of-control, over-accumulated capital. In January 2016, the development agency Oxfam published a follow-up to its report on global inequality that had been released the previous year. According to the new report, now just 62 billionaires -- down from 80 identified by the agency in its January 2015 report -- control as much wealth as one half of the world's population, and the top 1% owns more wealth than the other 99% combined. Beyond the transnational capitalist class and the upper echelons of the global power bloc, the richest 20 percent of humanity owns some 95 percent of the world's wealth, while the bottom 80 percent has to make do with just 5 percent. This 20-80 divide of global society into haves and the have-nots is the new global social apartheid. It is evident not just between rich and poor countries, but within each country, North and South, with the rise of new affluent high-consumption sectors alongside the downward mobility, "precariatization," destabilization and expulsion of majorities. Escalating inequalities fuel capitalism's chronic problem of over-accumulation: The transnational capitalist class cannot find productive outlets to unload the enormous amounts of surplus it has accumulated, leading to stagnation in the world economy. The signs of an impending depression are everywhere. The front page of the February 20 issue of The Economist read, "The World Economy: Out of Ammo?" Extreme levels of social polarization present a challenge to dominant groups. They strive to purchase the loyalty of that 20 percent, while at the same time dividing the 80 percent, co-opting some into a hegemonic bloc and repressing the rest. Alongside the spread of frightening new systems of social control and repression is heightened dissemination through the culture industries and corporate marketing strategies that depoliticize through consumerist fantasies and the manipulation of desire. As "Trumpism" in the United States so well illustrates, another strategy of co-optation is the manipulation of fear and insecurity among the downwardly mobile so that social anxiety is channeled toward scapegoated communities. This psychosocial mechanism of displacing mass anxieties is not new, but it appears to be increasing around the world in the face of the structural destabilization of capitalist globalization. Scapegoated communities are under siege, such as the Rohingya in Myanmar, the Muslim minority in India, the Kurds in Turkey, southern African immigrants in South Africa, and Syrian and Iraqi refugees and other immigrants in Europe. As with its 20th century predecessor, 21st century fascism hinges on such manipulation of social anxiety at a time of acute capitalist crisis. Extreme inequality requires extreme violence and repression that lend to projects of 21st century fascism. 2) The system is fast reaching the ecological limits to its reproduction. We have reached several tipping points in what environmental scientists refer to as nine crucial "planetary boundaries." We have already exceeded these boundaries in three areas -- climate change, the nitrogen cycle and diversity loss. There have been five previous mass extinctions in earth's history. While all these were due to natural causes, for the first time ever, human conduct is intersecting with and fundamentally altering the earth system. We have entered what Paul Crutzen, the Dutch environmental scientist and Nobel Prize winner, termed the Anthropocene -- a new age in which humans have transformed up to half of the world's surface. We are altering the composition of the atmosphere and acidifying the oceans at a rate that undermines the conditions for life. The ecological dimensions of global crisis cannot be understated. "We are deciding, without quite meaning to, which evolutionary pathways will remain open and which will forever be closed," observes Elizabeth Kolbert in her best seller, The Sixth Extinction. "No other creature has ever managed this ... The Sixth Extinction will continue to determine the course of life long after everything people have written and painted and built has been ground into dust." Capitalism cannot be held solely responsible. The human-nature contradiction has deep roots in civilization itself. The ancient Sumerian empires, for example, collapsed after the population over-salinated their crop soil. The Mayan city-state network collapsed about AD 900 due to deforestation. And the former Soviet Union wrecked havoc on the environment. However, given capital's implacable impulse to accumulate profit and its accelerated commodification of nature, it is difficult to imagine that the environmental catastrophe can be resolved within the capitalist system. "Green capitalism" appears as an oxymoron, as sadistic capitalism's attempt to turn the ecological crisis into a profit-making opportunity, along with the conversion of poverty into a tourist attraction. 3) The sheer magnitude of the means of violence is unprecedented, as is the concentrated control over the means of global communications and the production and circulation of knowledge, symbols and images. We have seen the spread of frightening new systems of social control and repression that have brought us into the panoptical surveillance society and the age of thought control. This real-life Orwellian world is in a sense more perturbing than that described by George Orwell in his iconic novel 1984. In that fictional world, people were compelled to give their obedience to the state ("Big Brother") in exchange for a quiet existence with guarantees of employment, housing and other social necessities. Now, however, the corporate and political powers that be force obedience even as the means of survival are denied to the vast majority. Global apartheid involves the creation of "green zones" that are cordoned off in each locale around the world where elites are insulated through new systems of spatial reorganization, social control and policing. "Green zone" refers to the nearly impenetrable area in central Baghdad that US occupation forces established in the wake of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The command center of the occupation and select Iraqi elite inside that green zone were protected from the violence and chaos that engulfed the country. Urban areas around the world are now green zoned through gentrification, gated communities, surveillance systems, and state and private violence. Inside the world's green zones, privileged strata avail themselves of privatized social services, consumption and entertainment. They can work and communicate through internet and satellite sealed off under the protection of armies of soldiers, police and private security forces. Green zoning takes on distinct forms in each locality. In Palestine, I witnessed such zoning in the form of Israeli military checkpoints, Jewish settler-only roads and the apartheid wall. In Mexico City, the most exclusive residential areas in the upscale Santa Fe District are accessible only by helicopter and private gated roads. In Johannesburg, a surreal drive through the exclusive Sandton City area reveals rows of mansions that appear as military compounds, with private armed towers and electrical and barbed-wire fences. In Cairo, I toured satellite cities ringing the impoverished center and inner suburbs where the country's elite could live out their aspirations and fantasies. They sport gated residential complexes with spotless green lawns, private leisure and shopping centers and English-language international schools under the protection of military checkpoints and private security police. In other cities, green zoning is subtler but no less effective. In Los Angeles, where I live, the freeway system now has an express lane reserved for those that can pay an exorbitant toll. On this lane, the privileged speed by, while the rest remain one lane over, stuck in the city's notorious bumper-to-bumper traffic -- or even worse, in notoriously underfunded and underdeveloped public transportation, where it may take half a day to get to and from work. There is no barrier separating this express lane from the others. However, a near-invisible closed surveillance system monitors every movement. If a vehicle without authorization shifts into the exclusive lane, it is instantly recorded by this surveillance system and a heavy fine is imposed on the driver, under threat of impoundment, while freeway police patrols are ubiquitous. Outside of the global green zones, warfare and police containment have become normalized and sanitized for those not directly at the receiving end of armed aggression. "Militainment" -- portraying and even glamorizing war and violence as entertaining spectacles through Hollywood films and television police shows, computer games and corporate "news" channels -- may be the epitome of sadistic capitalism. It desensitizes, bringing about complacency and indifference. In between the green zones and outright warfare are prison industrial complexes, immigrant and refugee repression and control systems, the criminalization of outcast communities and capitalist schooling. The omnipresent media and cultural apparatuses of the corporate economy, in particular, aim to colonize the mind -- to undermine the ability to think critically and outside the dominant worldview. A neofascist culture emerges through militarism, extreme masculinization, racism and racist mobilizations against scapegoats. 4) We are reaching limits to the extensive expansion of capitalism. Capitalism is like riding a bicycle: When you stop pedaling the bicycle, you fall over. If the capitalist system stops expanding outward, it enters crisis and faces collapse. In each earlier structural crisis, the system went through a new round of extensive expansion -- from waves of colonial conquest in earlier centuries, to the integration in the late 20th and early 21st centuries of the former socialist countries, China, India and other areas that had been marginally outside the system. There are no longer any new territories to integrate into world capitalism. Meanwhile, the privatization of education, health care, utilities, basic services and public land are turning those spaces in global society that were outside of capital's control into "spaces of capital." Even poverty has been turned into a commodity. What is there left to commodify? Where can the system now expand? With the limits to expansion comes a turn toward militarized accumulation -- making wars of endless destruction and reconstruction and expanding the militarization of social and political institutions so as to continue to generate new opportunities for accumulation in the face of stagnation. 5) There is the rise of a vast surplus population inhabiting a "planet of slums," alienated from the productive economy, thrown into the margins and subject to these sophisticated systems of social control and destruction. Global capitalism has no direct use for surplus humanity. But indirectly, it holds wages down everywhere and makes new systems of 21st century slavery possible. These systems include prison labor, the forced recruitment of miners at gunpoint by warlords contracted by global corporations to dig up valuable minerals in the Congo, sweatshops and exploited immigrant communities (including the rising tide of immigrant female caregivers for affluent populations). Furthermore, the global working class is experiencing accelerated "precariatization." The "new precariat" refers to the proletariat that faces capital under today's unstable and precarious labor relations -- informalization, casualization, part-time, temp, immigrant and contract labor. As communities are uprooted everywhere, there is a rising reserve army of immigrant labor. The global working class is becoming divided into citizen and immigrant workers. The latter are particularly attractive to transnational capital, as the lack of citizenship rights makes them particularly vulnerable, and therefore, exploitable. The challenge for dominant groups is how to contain the real and potential rebellion of surplus humanity, the immigrant workforce and the precariat. How can they contain the explosive contradictions of this system? The 21st century megacities become the battlegrounds between mass resistance movements and the new systems of mass repression. Some populations in these cities (and also in abandoned countryside) are at risk of genocide, such as those in Gaza, zones in Somalia and Congo, and swaths of Iraq and Syria. 6) There is a disjuncture between a globalizing economy and a nation-state-based system of political authority. Transnational state apparatuses are incipient and do not wield enough power and authority to organize and stabilize the system, much less to impose regulations on runaway transnational capital. In the wake of the 2008 financial collapse, for instance, the governments of the G-8 and G-20 were unable to impose transnational regulation on the global financial system, despite a series of emergency summits to discuss such regulation. Elites historically have attempted to resolve the problems of over-accumulation by state policies that can regulate the anarchy of the market. However, in recent decades, transnational capital has broken free from the constraints imposed by the nation-state.

## The Alternative and ROB

#### This debate is about competing methodologies – the question of the ballot is whose ethical orientation best catalyzes political organization against Capitalism. Vote for the debater that best affirms the Communist Hypothesis.

**Walker 14** – (Gavin, Assistant Professor of History and East Asian Studies at McGill University, “The Reinvention of Communism: Politics, History, Globality,” The South Atlantic Quarterly 113:4, Fall 2014)

S in c e the turn of the twenty-first century, the term communism has returned to the theoretical and historical agenda with a striking force and a surprising novelty. 1 In a wide range of fields of knowledge, the questions of the actuality and the history of the world communist movement, the theoretical tendencies of communist thought, and the current political possibilities of new developments of communism have been revisited and addressed anew. In the social movements that have sprung up in nations around the world—from Spain to Greece to Quebec, throughout Latin America, Asia, Africa, and beyond—-the word communism has again acquired a critical force, not a force of nostalgia or simple retrospection, but a new and creative force. We can only be struck by the de

gree to which it now seems that communism, far from the dead end of the twentieth century it was long assumed to be, may be something profoundly of the twenty-first century, an idea and field of concepts whose time has come.¶ When Antonio Negri emphasizes that the communists today are “alone and potent,” he alerts us to a crucial point that I want to highlight, from two divergent directions, in the following essay. Rather than see the contemporary communist moment simply as a “return,” implying a transposition of the same forces, forms, and contents, this moment **indicates** instead an open field for the reinvention of communism. The earlier modality of twentieth-century communism, linked above all to the existence and continuity established by the Soviet Union, no longer exists. **No longer is there a national** form **or federated space that would serve as a “bulwark” of the communist project**. In this sense, the communists today are alone. Yet Negri insists that the communists are alone and potent. This potency is derived, not as in the previous arrangement, from a site of institutional force that could be treated as a model of explanation, but from this fact of being alone, untethered, unguaranteed, not beholden to a specific historical telos. In this sense, the communists today are potent because they are alone. What does this new political solitude mean for the concepts and contents of communism in our contemporary moment?¶ Two distinct trends emerge in this development of communism in our global present. One is the great historic movement that has transferred the center of gravity of a reinvented communist politics to the exterior of the West, taken in the broadest sense. This globality of communism is in essence a fulfillment of a promise rather than a historical accident, the fulfillment of a politics that from the outset sought a new theoretical and political destiny beyond the horizon of the national and local. The second is the striking link between this return—and reinvention—of communism and its site of return, one of which is without doubt the field of “critical theory.” What makes this site peculiar is that it too, like the political potential of communism itself, has been in a long retreat since the 1980s in the fields of knowledge production around the world. Theory’s originary impulse toward the politicization of knowledge, the immanent critique of the university, and its globality, the fact that theory has long provided a common language beyond the regime of national language, has been the target of an intense revanchist attack by institutional neoliberalism, conservative politics, and positivist knowledge work. But new experiences have emerged in recent years to produce a situation in which these two developments—one linked to the practical social movements and reinventions of political organization and the other linked to the crystallization of a new trend in theory—are experiencing complex and volatile articulations and points of contact. What we are seeing today is perhaps the first emergence of a new direction and politicization of theory itself, the first stirrings of a communist critical theory.¶ P o litics: P e rs is te n c e a n d S cissio n¶ One distinguishing feature of the current discussions of the “communist hypothesis” (Badiou), the “actuality of communism” (Bosteels), and “the communist horizon” (Dean) is a renewal of an insistence on the primacy of politics over the mere presupposition of a politics derived from the structural analysis of global capitalism’s current tendencies, level of technical composition, and scale of development of the productive forces. These thinkers maintain a conception of politics that upholds its rarity, its intermittent or hazardous quality. Rather than accept the given character of politics, in which it would become a figure of ubiquity or immanence (the banal argument that “everything is political”), the rethinking of the question of communism has also insisted on a divergent genealogy of what is and what is not political. Rather than a constantly presupposed undercurrent, this figure of politics would instead be, for instance, in Alain Badiou (2001), the rare event that grounds a political sequence and convokes a subject through a fidelity, or in Jacques Ranciere’s (1999) terms, the egalitarian proposal that suspends the representations possible in the dominant order (“the police”).2 This concept of politics is, above all, linked to new attempts to think the place of the subject of politics, and it is this point that provides an entry into the critical dimensions of this “communist hypothesis” within the theoretical field.¶ The rethinking of communism today has distinguished itself as a trend in insisting on antagonism, contradiction, the subject, politics, and organization; it refuses gestures of diffusion, multiplicity as such, **focusing on the** dialectical conditions of the possible **rather** **than** the immanent conditions of the impossible. **There** **is** here **a** reaction to the monopoly held by a very specific register—the Derridean register of defeat and withdrawal, the **Deleuzian register of immanence and multiplicity**—within the broadly left trends of thought and knowledge production. Metapolitically speaking, we can observe within the works associated with this “communist hypothesis” **a rebirth of** **simple**, seemingly “obvious” **concepts**: truth, justice, fidelity, struggle, honor, courage, and so forth, concepts largely derided in the postdeconstruction trends of thought and relegated to the realm of the “popular,” avoided as vulgarities too “earnest” for the field of so-called theory. Instead, detachment, irony, withdrawal, defeat, finitude, the impossibility of presence, the impossibility of naming, the impossibility of an affirmative creation, and the impossibility of an interventionist politics proper often constitute the typical terms of theoretical work. There is thus in the recent communist current a refusal to accept this by-now rigid division of labor, one that has decisive consequences for both politics and critical theory itself.¶ What lies behind this new vocabulary and new set of gestures? Above all, it is the insistence on a link between the internal dynamics of theory and the external situation, in particular, on the question of organization. Let us consider a few short texts that might be taken as a “pre-history” of this notion, a polemical period of Badiou’s work that expresses the essence of the overall problem: how to develop and conceptualize a theory of politics that is not simply a reflection or proof of a structural or given feature of the situation in which we find ourselves, a theory of politics that is not beholden to concepts of historical necessity. Behind this thesis lies a resistance to the notion that politics is involved in a flattening of phenomena, a fear of antagonism, the preference for holism over division, the emphasis on consensus, on “friendship,” against contestation.¶ In 1977 Badiou launched a frontal attack against Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s work for its implied political pitfalls. This attack on their “fascism of the potato” is excessive, dogmatic, beyond the demands of the political conjuncture (going so far as to identify them as “prefascist ideologues”). But it also contains an extremely important point for the paradox of organization within politics, perhaps the key kernel of the new trend inaugurated in theoretical work by the hypothesis of communism. In this text, Badiou (2012:199-200) reacts against Deleuze and Guattari’s celebration of multiplicity, appeals to escape, to flight, to becoming-multiple, becomingschizophrenic, becoming-minor, and so forth,3 by intersecting this theoretical work with the concrete terms of the political situation:¶ We have seen this in May ’68: If you have the mass revolt, but not the proletarian antagonism, you obtain the victory of the bourgeois antagonism (of bourgeois politics). If you have ideas that are just, but not Marxism, you obtain the return to power of the bourgeois reformists of the Parti Socialiste. If you have the objective forces, but neither the programme nor the party, you obtain the revenge of Pompidou’s parliamentarianism, you obtain the return to the scene of the PCF and the unions. ¶ Badiou argues that Deleuze and Guattari fail to carry through the very ideas that found their major theoretical concepts. They support the mass revolt, but lack the antagonism between “friends” and “enemies” of the people; they have “just ideas”—freedom, the overturning of injustice, the defense of the workers, the poor, the targets of a vicious imperialism in and out of the metropole—but no structural features link the situation of domination with an affirmative politics of inversion; they include the objective forces of the masses in social motion, but lack direction, a concrete framework within which the mass movement can orient itself. Badiou argues that these elements finally invert into their opposites: the victory of bourgeois politics, reformism, parliamentarism, and so forth. But what is behind this charge, this accusation? Two elements subtend this polemic whose compositional elements are returning today to the theoretical scene through the return to the communist hypothesis, namely, persistence and scission.¶ Badiou charges Deleuze and Guattari with the production of a theoretical¶ system that is itself in a constant process of diverting, redirecting, and moving sideways to avoid “capture.” Such a politics cannot sustain the forces it unleashes; it can initiate moments of dissensus within the dominant order, but it cannot persist in a full overturning of their foundations or proceed from this moment of dissensus to a new hegemony over the situation. Such a mode of thought poses questions, identifies structural injustices, and marks points of rupture, but it nevertheless chooses, at the final moment, to refuse to uphold a strong division, a strong break, an insistence on one side over another, one line over another.¶ Badiou (2012:199-200) puts this point in a dense and powerful formulation: “To think the multiple outside the two, outside scission, amounts to practicing in exteriority the dictatorship of the One.” If you think the multiple, you can expose the One to its internal disunity, the false impression of substantiality. But merely pointing to the multiple character of a social and political situation is not in itself a bridge to a politics. Remarking on the multivocal character of what appears as a unity is in no way a critique, much less an intervention, within this situation. Instead, the multivocal reality of the unitary image can always be recuperated precisely in the service of the One. In a circumstance of social struggle, it is never enough to point to the heterogeneous composition of all positions—“the police are also drawn from the lower stratum of society,” “their pensions are also being cut back by the state,” “within the ranks of the workers are some with terrible ideas,” “the activists are not as upstanding as they say they are,” and so on—and thereby to end in the original abstentionist position: “It’s all so complicated, it’s not just one thing and another.” This type of analysis, which always underscores the hybridity and mutual complicity of political scenarios, itself participates in the naive fantasy of imagining that exposing this multiplicity allows one out of the practice of partisanship. In such an optic, you can go on multiplying the options, always finding yet another option, always finding a “third way,” always insisting on escape from the binary, escape from the pressure of limited choices, always demanding an evacuation of responsibility, of having to uphold the consequences of a choice.¶ To force a cut in the situation is to assert that the One is forever split, that there is a two-line struggle in every social and political scenario, that politics proper consists in this scission itself: the formation of an antagonism where previously there was only a semblance of unity. This is why Badiou emphasizes the Two—when you choose to say, “I don’t want either side, they’re all bad, we don’t have to make a choice, we don’t have to have just one thing,” what is installed in theory and in practice is not a splitting or splintering of the One into **its infinitely heterogeneous elements** (the thesis of multiplicity) but a withdrawal that allows the One to remain intact. This is precisely what Badiou calls, in the above formulation, “practicing in exteriority the dictatorship of the One.” By choosing flight or escape, the status quo (**i.e., the One**) reasserts itself, this time stronger than before, bolstered by the experience of finding in its own image of multiplicity a renewed unity. What remains a true politics is the courage to choose, to insist on the Two, to not fear division, separation, scission. To accept the responsibility of the choice, to accept that there is no way to opt out—that the act of a supposed withdrawal is in fact a refusal to countenance real movement, real overturning of the situation, a break that has to be sustained—is to accept the responsibility to uphold the choice despite the fact that there is no going back.¶ What does this argument contain for the current rethinking of communism? Above all, it holds that politics is contained not in overturning the system of social binaries, or in finding a “third way,” or in **escapism**, defeatism, or abstention. A common thread today, in all the thinkers reinventing the term communism, is a long and arduous struggle for hegemony in the world of thought, a world devoted to concepts of the “death of the subject,” the refusal of binaries, the emphasis on incessant multiplicity, and so forth. This struggle for a new politics recognizes the dead end of these “philosophies of defeat,” in Bruno Bosteels’s terms. It recognizes that a new communist development will come, not from the endless work of withdrawal and negation as such, but from the affirmative and interventionist declaration that politics is possible and the status quo can be permanently fractured. And this **fracture produces the need for a persistence**, the ability to carry through the full consequences of the initial break.