# 1NC

## 1

#### Capitalism is a system engendering massive violence and inevitable extinction – the foundational task is to find a way out – the Role of the Ballot is to endorse the best organizational tactics.

Badiou ‘18

[Alain, former chair of philosophy at the Ecole Normale Superiure, professor of philosophy at The European Graduate School. Translated by David Broder. 07/30/2018. “The Neolithic, Capitalism, and Communism,” <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3948-the-neolithic-capitalism-and-communism>] pat

Today, it has become commonplace to predict the end of the human race such as we know it. There are various reasons for such forecasts. According to a messianic kind of environmentalism, the excessive predations of a beastly humanity will soon bring about the end of life on Earth. Meanwhile, those who instead point to runaway technological advances prophesy, indiscriminately, the automation of all work by robots, grand developments in computing, automatically-generated art, plastic-coated killers, and the dangers of a super-human intelligence.

Suddenly, we see the emergence of threatening categories like transhumanism and the post-human — or, their mirror image, a return to our animal state — depending on whether one prophesies on the basis of technological innovation or laments all the attacks on Mother Nature.

For me, all such prophesies are just so much ideological noise, intended to obscure the real peril that humanity is today exposed to: that is to say, the impasse that globalised capitalism is leading us into. In fact, it is this form of society — and it alone — which permits the destructive exploitation of natural resources, precisely because it connects this exploitation to the boundless quest for private profit. The fact that so many species are endangered, that climate change cannot be controlled, that water is becoming like some rare treasure, is all a by-product of the merciless competition among billionaire predators. There is no other reason for the fact that scientific innovation is subject to the question of what technologies can sell, in an anarchic selection mechanism.

Environmentalist preaching does sometimes use persuasive descriptions of what is going on — despite the exaggerations typical of the prophet. But most of the time this becomes mere propaganda, useful for those states who want to show their friendly face. Just as it is for the multinationals who would have us believe — to the greater benefit of their balance sheets — in the noble, fraternal, natural purity of the commodities they are trafficking.

The fetishism of technology, and the unbroken series of "revolutions" in this domain — of which the "digital revolution" is the most in vogue — has constantly spread the beliefs both that this will take us to the paradise of a world without work — with robots to serve us, and us left to idle — and then, on the other hand, that digital "thought" will crush the human intellect. Today there is not one magazine that does not inform its astonished readers of the imminent "victory" of artificial over natural intelligence. But in most cases neither "nature" nor the "artificial" are properly or clearly defined.

Since the origins of philosophy, the question of the real scope of the word "nature" has been constantly posed. "Nature" could mean the romantic reverie of evening sunsets, the atomic materialism of Lucretius (De natura rerum), the inner being of things, Spinoza’s Totality (Deus sive Natura), the objective underside of all culture, rural and peasant surroundings as counterposed to the suspicious artificiality of the towns ("the earth does not lie," as Marshal Pétain put it), biology as distinct from physics, cosmology as compared to the tiny location that is our planet, the invariance of centuries as compared to the frenzy of innovation, natural sexuality as compared to perversion… I am afraid that today "nature" most of all refers to the calm of the villa and the garden, the charm wild animals have for tourists, and the beach or the mountains where we can spend a nice summer. Who, then, can imagine man responsible for nature, when thus far he has just been a thinking flea on a secondary planet in an average solar system at the edge of one banal galaxy?

Since its origins philosophy has also devoted a great deal of thought to Technology, or the Arts. The Greeks meditated on the dialectic of Techne and Physis — a dialectic within which they situated the human animal. They laid the ground for this animal to be seen as "a reed, the weakest of nature, but … a thinking reed." For Pascal, this meant that humanity was stronger than Nature and closer to God. A long time ago, they saw that the animal capable of mathematics would do great things to the order of materiality.

Are these "robots" which they keep banging on about anything more than calculation in the form of a machine? Digits in motion? We know that they can count quicker than us, but it was we who invented them, precisely in order to fulfil this task. It would be stupid to look at a crane raising a concrete pillar up to some great height, use this to argue that man is incapable of the same feat, and then conclude by saying that some muscular, superhuman giant has emerged… Lightning-quick counting is not the sign of an insuperable "intelligence" either. Technological transhumanism plays the same old tune — an inexhaustible theme of horror and sci-fi movies — of the creator overwhelmed by his own creation. It does so either thrilled about the advent of the superman — something we have been expecting ever since Nietzsche — or fearing him and taking refuge under the skirt of Gaia, Mother Nature.

Let’s put things in a bit more perspective.

For four or five millennia, humanity has been organised by the triad of private property — which concentrates enormous wealth in the hands of very narrow oligarchies; the family, in which fortunes are transmitted via inheritance; and the state, which protects both property and the family by armed force. This triad defined our species’ Neolithic age, and we are still at this point — we could even say, now more than ever. Capitalism is the contemporary form of the Neolithic. Its enslavement of technology in the interests of competition, profit and concentrating capital only raises to their fullest extension the monstrous inequalities, the social absurdities, the murderous wars, and the damaging ideologies that have always accompanied the deployment of new technology under the reign of class hierarchy throughout history.

We should be clear that technological inventions were the preliminary conditions of the arrival of the Neolithic age, and by no means its result. If we consider our species’ fate, we see that sedentary agriculture, the domestication of cattle and horses, pottery, bronze, metallic weapons, writing, nationalities, monumental architecture, and the monotheist religions are inventions at least as important as the airplane or the smartphone. Throughout history, whatever has been human has always, by definition, been artificial. If that had not existed, there would not have been Neolithic humanity — the humanity we know — but a permanent close proximity with animal life; something which did indeed exist, in the form of small nomadic groups, for around 200,000 years.

A fearful and obscurantist primitivism has its roots in the fallacious concept of "primitive communism." Today we can see this cult of the ancient societies in which babies, men, women and the elderly supposedly lived in fraternity, without anything artificial, and indeed lived in common with the mice, the frogs, and the bears. Ultimately, all this is nothing but ridiculous reactionary propaganda. For everything suggests that the societies in question were extremely violent. After all, even their most basic survival needs were constantly under threat.

To speak fearfully of the victory of the artificial over the nature, of robot over man, is today an untenable regression, something truly absurd. It is easy enough to answer such fears, such prophesies. For judged by this standard, even a simple axe, or a domesticated horse, not to mention a papyrus covered in symbols, is an exemplary case of the post- or trans-human. Even an abacus allows quicker calculation than the fingers of the human hand.

Today we need neither a return to primitivism, or fear of the "ravages" the advent of technology might bring. Nor is there any use in morbid fascination for the science-fiction of all-conquering robots. The urgent task we face is the methodical search for a way out of the Neolithic order. This latter has lasted for millennia, valuing only competition and hierarchy and tolerating the poverty of billions of human beings. It must be surpassed at all cost. Except, that is, the cost of the high-tech wars so well known to the Neolithic age, in the lineage of the wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, with their tens of millions of dead. And this time it could be a lot more.

The problem is not technology, or nature. The problem is how to organise societies at a global scale. We need to posit that a non-Neolithic way of organising society is possible. This means no private ownership of that which ought to be held in common, namely the production of all the necessities of human life. It means no inherited power or concentration of wealth. No separate state to protect oligarchies. No hierarchical division of labour. No nations, and no closed and hostile identities. A collective organisation of everything that is in the collective interest.

All this has a name, indeed a fine one: communism. Capitalism is but the final phase of the restrictions that the Neolithic form of society has imposed on human life. It is the final stage of the Neolithic. Humanity, that fine animal, must make one last push to break out of a condition in which 5,000 years of inventions served a handful of people. For almost two centuries — since Marx, anyway — we have known that we have to begin the new age. An age of technologies incredible for all of us, of tasks distributed equally among all of us, of the sharing of everything, and education that affirms the genius of all. May this new communism everywhere and on every question stand up against the morbid survival of capitalism. This capitalism, this seeming "modernity," represents a Neolithic world that has in fact been going on for five millennia. And that means that it is old — far too old.

#### Fantasies of disabled bodies as inherently resistant to capitalism mystifies how disability becomes a site of value extraction and papers over Western privilege.

Puar ‘17

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Neoliberal investments in the body as portfolio, as site of entrepreneurship, entail transition of some disabled bodies from the disciplinary institutions of containment, quarantine, and expulsion into forms of incorporative biopolitical control. David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder argue that “disabled people have shifted from modernity’s exception (a line of defect to be isolated and eradicated) to postmodernist [neoliberal] exceptionality (failing bodies resuscitated by an increasingly medicalized state). In this latter state, the ontology of disability retrieves a formerly fallen object and makes it newly available for cultural rehabilitation,” a euphemism for producing cultural docility.45 Mitchell and Snyder track this shift of people with disabilities located from “a former era of economic burden” of paternalistic, institutional, and welfare regimes when disabled people were “social pariahs,” to what they term “objects of care” that impel the investment of service economies and neoliberal strategies of intervention and rehabilitation—“a ‘hot’ ticket item for potential research and funding schemes.”

Mitchell and Snyder’s claim situates the disabled body as the site of extreme productivity— and thus, profitability— precisely through its lack of conventional productive laboring value. Once excluded from the labor system because of their “unproductivity,” disabled bodies have become the “sites for the exercise of the primitive accumulation that fuels capitalism.” This productivity is thus not “measured by his or her ability to produce goods and ser vices that satisfy social/human needs,” as Erevelles points out, but rather “based solely on capitalist exploitative demands for increasing profit.”48

And yet, despite this profitability, Mitchell and Snyder argue that the disabled non/laborer is also a resistant non-capacitated body, implicitly challenging the incomplete liberal proj ect of docility by refusing to assimilate into a laboring capacity. In echoing Russell and Malhotra’s conviction that disability reveals a central contradiction, a paradox even, of capitalism, Mitchell and Snyder laud Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s rerouting from the worker as the paradigmatic resistant subject in Marxist theory to “living labor” or “non- productive bodies,” as the nascent site of dissent. No longer able to locate a single site of re sis tance to capitalism in a “ simple, agonistic division of labor,” Mitchell and Snyder ask, “Where does re sistance manifest itself once a concept of the workers’ revolution no longer seems tenable and how will this re sis tance govern itself without the institution of new hierarchies of in equality?”49 In other words, the undermining of capitalism will come from those who cannot or will not work, from those whose “capacities make them ‘unfit’ for labor.”50 This unfitness, they argue, proves “imminently productive” because these bodies inhabit and generate alternative biopo liti cal scripts of consumption, family, and nation.51 They evidence this assertion by averring that “the disabled people that we know are some of the worst consumers on the planet because they have neither the means, the interest, nor the gullibility of mistaking meaning with market . . . disabled artists in the U.S. live some of the most sparingly non- consumptive lives and, yet, this is what we admire about them the most.”52

I will leave aside for a moment the geopolitical inflections fueling certitude regarding the passé potential of organized resistance at the point of production. The claim about the inherent resistant capacity of the non-productive disabled laborer bears a complex relation to Mitchell and Snyder’s earlier conviction that disabled bodies have now transitioned into objects of care that represent a unique site for the capture of every element for capitalist profit. Do the individual consumption practices of disabled people (artists) mitigate, even remotely, the profitability of the sites of primitive accumulation that objects of care generate? Further, the resistance of non-consumptive lives pales in a global economic context where, as Gayatri Spivak reminds us, humanistic training in consumerism is foreclosed for populations whose labor creates consumer opportunities for others. The (individual) capacity to consume—or to refuse to consume—is already predicated on the privileged position of the consumer-citizen. Mitchell and Snyder lionize the non-laboring debilitated body as the new threshold of resistance — a crypto- capacity — via their positions as improper producers as well as consumers. But this formulation, as much as it would seem empowering to embrace, actually relies on the occlusion of the centrality of debilitation to the workings of capitalism. It effaces the unflinching need for “social pariahs” available for injury, excluded from the economies that hail certain bodies worthy of being objects of care, however compromised this inclusion may be. There are surely individuals with disabilities [disabled people] who perhaps neither labor nor consume “properly,” but any resistance this may signal is not an a priori feature of being disabled. Further, populations that are not roped into an economy of rehabilitative objects of care are sites of profit precisely for their availability for injury, their inability to labor, their exclusion from adequate health care, and their ideological production as lazy, criminal, and burdensome. While these populations may well enact various forms of resistance to capitalism, they do not escape the violent pro cesses of primitive accumulation that extract profit from the disposability that threatens these exact populations.

Mitchell and Snyder further vacillate between the figures of the resistant non- productive unfit non/worker and that very same worker as incorporated into capitalist sites of profit. They argue that “we are increasingly approaching a time when all that formerly passed as the undesirability of life in a disabled body proves increasingly ‘advantageous’ from the standpoint of an immaterial labor market.” The immaterial labor market is a reference to technologies that allow for productivity to be redefined against the grain of the “laboring body”— for example, fostering virtual participation in workplaces for mobility- impaired individuals. However, these very same technologies, driven by the conventional laboring body, produce vastly debilitated populations across the globe, from Chinese laborers in Apple factories who commit suicide, to wheelchair technology that enhances mobility developed in Israel 48 on the backs of Palestinian oppression and immobility, to the mountains of e-waste hand-sanded by the working poor in India, to the neo colonial extraction of minerals and natural substances from resource- rich areas for the purposes of manufacturing hardware.

Is it possible that the figure of the non-productive disabled body becomes something of a fetish in Mitchell and Snyder’s text, recoding resistance as a form of automatic capacitation, an onto-crypto-capacity? This body occludes, to some extent, populations that are neither positioned as resistant to capitalism nor promoted as objects of care. Rather these populations are constructed as objects of imminent disposability, continually subjected to paternalistic austerity regimes, violent institutionalization, and debilitation that is not in any way redeemable through cultural rehabilitation. (Cultural rehabilitation as an ave nue to normalization can be eschewed only if in fact it is an available possibility to turn away from.) Their debilitation functions as a form of value extraction for otherwise disposable bodies. Lauding the inherent resistance to capitalism of disabled bodies as well as the advantages of the immaterial labor market for people with disabilities both depend on three factors: first, the assumption or invocation of the identity or grouping of disabled people as an a priori given; which then, secondly, entails the substantial occlusion of the manufacturing of disability, that is, capitalist exploitation as an ongoing process of debilitation; which then, thirdly, submerges the supplemental relation between objects of care and social pariahs or objects of disposability — disability as a potential site of cultural incorporation and debilitation of populations made available and/or targeted for injury—in a neoliberal economy that profits from both. The burden-to-care periodization is one that therefore racializes as well as temporospatializes: between eugenics as it has been and the biopolitics of inclusion of the now (described as “post- imperialist”), a split that largely speaks to liberal spaces of privilege; and between the pro gress of the West/developed nations and the disarray of the rest/developing nations. ///

#### Despite its radical branding, mutual aid doesn’t directly challenge and uproot the capitalist social order because it relies on the redistribution of resources from the dispossessed, rather than seizing and redistributing resources from their point of creation

Breslauer ‘20

(Gus, “Mutual Aid: A Factor of Liberalism,” 11/27/2020, Regeneration, https://regenerationma g.org/mutual-aid-a-factor-of-liberalism/, accessed 3/14/2021) JA

Mutual-aid is in the air. Look near any anarchist or socialist project, and you will see the importance of it emphasized in big bold text. In the name of mutual-aid, people are doing food shares, [repairing pot-holes in black bloc attire](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/anarchists-fixing-potholes-portland_n_58caaa7be4b0ec9d29d9575b), [fixing brake lights](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/xwwkaa/the-democratic-socialists-are-here-to-fix-your-brake-lights), [mucking and gutting flooded houses](https://www.redneckrevolt.org/single-post/2017/09/11/REPORTBACK-HURRICANE-HARVEY), and giving out Narcan and clean IV supplies to drug users. These have become ubiquitous practices on the left. All very good deeds, how can we be against this? When people are hungry, you feed them. If you have two coats and your neighbor has none, you have one coat and your neighbor now has one. The impulse is more than relatable, I too believe in these things. The appeal is hard to disagree with. From disaster to crisis, mutual aid comes like Superman to save the day, feeding and housing everyone, saving each other’s lives. But the truth is, mutual-aid isn’t a challenge or threat to the social order which produced hunger and precarity. The state is largely indifferent or [even welcoming to it](https://gdoc.pub/doc/e/2PACX-1vRMxV09kdojzMdyOfapJUOB6Ko2_1iAfIm8ELeIgma21wIt5HoTqP1QXadF01eZc0ySrPW6VtU_veyp?fbclid=IwAR3lCsMai9TODenw3PcDoDX9ofND4EbXgpx1U0Ij3b15c2vtZ074ez1o5Lg). In a world where the working class is increasingly being told to fend for itself, can we continue to call this “solidarity” with any honesty? If not, then what actually do these practices *do* for us? The problem of poverty is precisely that we don’t have the shit. Let’s get a few very agreeable things straight, which really clarify why mutual aid is wholly insufficient: 1. The world of private property and wage labor drive poverty and produced a number of social problems. 2. The poor and working class is characterized by lacking reserves and does not have free time, and 3. The poor and working class do not have the unpaid labor and unused property by which to alleviate these problems directly without going to the source keeping it from them. However, Big Door Brigade, a [website](http://bigdoorbrigade.com/what-is-mutual-aid/) which collects and aggregates mutual-aid efforts across the country says the opposite: *“What do we mean by “mutual aid”? Mutual aid is when people get together to meet each other’s basic survival needs with a shared understanding that the systems we live under are not going to meet our needs and we can do it together RIGHT NOW!”* How can both be true? If the working class does not have the shit, why is mutual aid elevated as “the work”? What are the impulses behind the popularity of mutual aid? Is it organizing? Is it solidarity? What do these things mean if it is not? What does [the Bread guy](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/kropotkin-peter/index.htm) that AOC likes to quote actually have to say about all of this? **Honest Service Work** It is more honest to call the bulk of what gets sold as mutual aid to be “service work”. This comes under various names: “survival programs”, mutual aid, and “serve the people”. Regardless of the nomenclature, these function largely the same. They are not new, Food Not Bombs has been a staple of anarchist culture for decades. There is no shortage of examples of good groups engaging in honest service work throughout history. The most well-known example is the [Black Panthers](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_dCL2F571Q). As the Black Panthers were constantly portrayed in the media as frightening armed terrorists, [their survival programs](https://atlantablackstar.com/2015/03/26/8-black-panther-party-programs-that-were-more-empowering-than-federal-government-programs/) served a number of functions at once. They brought legitimacy to their more central practices. They improved their standing amongst the people they were trying to organize. They also served as an outlet for those wanting to have an “immediate” positive impact. It also overcame barriers to organizing, a Communist Party that takes up a literacy campaign doesn’t just do this to improve lives, but to actually further be able to reach people and deepen their relationships. It is worth delineating and examining these and how they related to other organizing. The Lincoln Hospital was a site of struggle for the [Young Lords](https://www.thenation.com/article/culture/young-lords-radical-history-johanna-fernandez-review/) as much as it was a place transformed by service work into something more egalitarian and humanistic. This was the kernel of what would become “[harm reduction](https://communemag.com/junkie-communism/)”, which is mostly voluntaristic work that saves lives every day. The [Chicago Women’s Liberation Union](https://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01035/) had service work as a part of its multilateral apparatus, [providing abortion care and procedures](https://www.cwluherstory.org/jane-abortion-service) women did not have access to, this was one of many projects which brought attention to their brand of [Socialist Feminism](https://www.marxists.org/subject/women/authors/ehrenreich-barbara/socialist-feminism.htm), while they also were heavily involved in workplace organizing amongst women in Chicago factories. It is hard to not be influenced by a historic organization which incorporated service work. Honest service work is not always antithetical to a broader struggle which is primarily propelled by target-and-demand driven projects. They can be a very good supplement, to the point where if you are in a growing group dedicated to class struggle that is really making bigger and bigger moves, devoting a bit of extra labor in this direction is a good idea. However, it raises the question of an overall strategy, and where we really want to put our faith. We need to harvest new relations and forms of care, but outside the context of conflict, we lack the thrust which gives these new forms their class character. This is not just the domain of the left either, Identity Evropa (a fascist group, now American Identity Movement) [shares supplies and picks up trash in parks and neighborhoods](https://medium.com/@orwellspeaks/nazis-are-picking-up-trash-and-why-it-matters-8d459e582a29), and you’ll hear a lot about the “good work” that [Gazi and the Black Hammer organization](http://hoodcommunist.org/2020/09/10/black-activist-build-utopia/) are doing. However, this also says a lot for how we should approach honest service work: it’s politically neutral, often the domain of opportunists, and is very limited. It should be seen honestly for what it is, rather than giving the impression that this suffices for organizing. A “both-and” approach isn’t something I’m against, but it’s on us to make the service-work supportive of the organization’s broader thrust. **Words and Deeds** Today’s mutual aid efforts spend a great deal of time explaining all the ways in which they are not charity. They try to make it clear that they, the feeders of the hungry, are on the same side as the freedom fighters. [According to Mutual Aid activist Dean Spade](https://www.deanspade.net/2019/12/04/mutual-aid-chart/), mutual aid organizations “*Use people power to resist any efforts by government to regulate or shut down activities*”, “*is connected to other tactics, including disruptive tactics aimed at root causes of the distress the aid addresses*”, and *“builds broader political participation, solidarity, mobilization, radicalization”.* Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez says in her [Mutual Aid 101 guide](https://gdoc.pub/doc/e/2PACX-1vRMxV09kdojzMdyOfapJUOB6Ko2_1iAfIm8ELeIgma21wIt5HoTqP1QXadF01eZc0ySrPW6VtU_veyp?fbclid=IwAR3lCsMai9TODenw3PcDoDX9ofND4EbXgpx1U0Ij3b15c2vtZ074ez1o5Lg), that mutual aid is: *“A great jumping off point for other kinds of organizing and movement work”* My contention is that mutual aid organizations do little, to none of this. The beliefs and rhetoric simply do not translate into action. There is certainly support at the peaks of struggle, protests are supplied with medics and water-bearers, however this is not the way this looks day-to-day, for either the mutual-aid groups, or the disruptive organizations they claim to build solidarity with. Most of the day-to-day looks like increasing support for mutual aid. One characteristic of mutual aid sticks out, and reminds me of the self-exploitation that co-op workers put themselves through. It’s the rebranding of what are essentially capitalist firms and enterprises to be “movement-friendly”. As someone experienced on what a non-profit looks like from the inside, including as someone who was paid but was glad to do the work otherwise, this jumps out as a major concern from Spade’s chart: *“Efforts to flatten hierarchies—e.g. flat wage scales if anyone is paid, training so that new people can do work they weren’t professionally trained to do, rotating facilitation roles, language access”* If implemented on a wider scale, this could possibly lower the value of everyone’s labor in a related industry. The capitalist class laughs all the way to the bank with this one, just look at the [“learn to code for free”](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/sep/21/coding-education-teaching-silicon-valley-wages) classes tech companies are giving, this lowers the cost of the labor for everyone, which Silicon Valley wants very badly to cut. There’s also nothing preventing a non-profit from seeing this and running with it, thus using a mix of volunteer and paid-staff labor to further exploit everyone! I always try to reserve judgement not for where people came from, and less so (but still important) what they say, but mostly for what they *do*. These are not always the same thing, and the disconnect should always set off alarms. mutual aid groups dress up what is functionally similar to NGOs and church groups, and pass it off as something new and most contentiously, something “radical”. Most of what Spade characterizes as mutual-aid he believes is radical because of what is believed about poverty (which reduces stigma) by the organization, how people are educated (to overcome differences), and an egalitarianism of expertises and skills. These are all good things, but all in the realm of ideas, the problem isn’t the way we think about care and poverty, it’s about how it’s organized, and how our labor is organized. The problems and insufficiency with NGOs was never really the services they provide though, it’s where they locate and build power (“proper channels”, Democratic Party, seat at the table), and yes, to Spade’s credit, their ethic and structure. However, it’s not clear if breaking with this structure in form yields some new content. If anything, the mutual aid model that has become popularized is a good guide of practices that many non-profits could adapt and improve themselves, and they should. At times when reading Spade, I become confused as to whether what is being proposed cannot be done by a non-profit or is antithetical to them, as when describing the solidarity which mutual-aid builds, he still describes a non-profit organization (Sylvia Rivera Law Project), with a multi-tiered staff structure and all the fixings.

#### Vote negative for communist organizing – that requires collective struggle and the establishment of centralized organization to inform both theory and practice.

Kuhn ‘18

[Gabriel, Austrian-born writer and translator living in Sweden. Among his book publications is “All Power to the Councils! A Documentary History of the German Revolution of 1918-1919”. March 2018. “Don't Mourn, Organize! Is Communism a Pipe Dream—or a Viable Future?” <https://brooklynrail.org/2018/03/field-notes/Dont-Morn-Organize-Is-Communism-a-Pipe-Dreamor-a-Viable-Future>] pat

The forms of organization this requires must go further than the affinity group but stop short of the vanguard party. Affinity groups do not answer the demand for mass organizing that mass societies require. But neither do vanguard parties. They attempt to lead the masses, not organize them, and that’s a big difference. The party model might in general be insufficient for mass organizing today. The networks that movementism gave way to are perhaps more appropriate, but only if they can overcome the assumption that the looser the connections are, the better. This assumption is wrong. Loose connections might suit the needs of an ever more flexible market economy, but not of effective political organizing. To “have contacts” is not enough; you need to do something with them. And you need to stay committed to the projects you initiate. I will try to flesh this out by listing the aspects I consider most important in organizing today.

1. We need to leave sectarianism behind. The left is weak and each additional division weakens it further. In a 2011 article titled “Movement, Cadre, and the Dual Power,” Joel Olson made a simple, yet very important observation: “We believe that the old arguments between communists and anarchists are largely irrelevant today.” This must be our point of departure.

2. We need theory that is adapted to our times. It must overcome the false contradiction between “class struggle” and “cultural struggle.” There is a fruitful debate about a “new class politics” in the German-speaking world. Sebastian Friedrich, one of its main proponents, drew these conclusions in an article published by Counterpunch:

A new class politics does not relegate gender, race, and imperial legacy to issues that are supplementary to class relations. These issues, and the struggles they imply, are an integral part of class relations. In fact, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-colonial struggles are the base on which effective unified class struggles must be launched.… A new class politics must clarify where and how the specific experiences of workers based on gender, race, citizenship, and other factors converge. It must reveal the overlapping interests of workers as members of the class. This makes common struggles possible.

3. We must not rely on the “objective forces” identified by historical materialism. Subjective forces are important for change. It is easy to underestimate how much neoliberalism shapes the lives even of people opposed to it. In the Global North, political activism has become a leisure activity that people engage in or not, depending on their mood, the identity they are trying to create for themselves, or the road of “self-improvement” they have chosen. In almost all cases, it is secondary to professional careers and personal comforts. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to get anything done. There is nothing wrong with being “voluntaristic.” Radical change is dependent on people wanting radical change, no matter how much Marxists still insist on economic realities determining individual consciousness and, therefore, individuals’ capacity for political action. An organization’s efficiency relies on the individual qualities of its members, that is, responsibility, reliability, and accountability.

Making Things Concrete

If we want communism to be more than a pipe dream, we have to be willing to face reality, even if it confuses, challenges, or even frightens us. We cannot ignore struggles that refer to communist ideals, simply because they aren’t the struggles we’d like to see. If our enthusiasm for communism remains limited to lecture halls and conference rooms, it won’t be anything the powerful will lose sleep over.

The struggle that currently receives most attention among communists of all stripes in the Global North is the one in Kurdistan. In Rojava (Syrian Kurdistan), forces affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, PKK, have established a direct-democratic council system, based on the “democratic confederalism” conceived by the imprisoned PKK leader Abduallah Öcalan. Öcalan describes democratic confederalism as “a non-state political administration or a democracy without a state,” and cites Murray Bookchin’s “libertarian municipalism” as a major influence. There are people who celebrate this as a form of anarchism. But as an observant friend of mine noted, an anarchism that is imposed by a leader is a strange kind of anarchism. Besides, there are reports from the ground that challenge the libertarian narrative. The editors of Lower Class Magazine, an online project dedicated to “low budget underground journalism,” travel regularly to Kurdistan and have the following to say:

The Western left sees Rojava as the realization of a democracy “from below”: communes, councils, a confederation; no hierarchies, no party, a spontaneous mass project. Anarchists and “libertarian” communists wax lyrically about the dawn of a direct-democratic Shangri-La. […] Yes, the change in Rojava comes “from below. It is based on the power of the people, no doubt. Communes and councils are at the heart of decision-making, that is true. But as essential is the following: None of this would be happening if it wasn’t for a vanguard leading the way. The revolution in Rojava proves that Leninist vanguardism is correct, not false.

Another European journalist visiting the region noted that the cadres of the People’s Protection Units, YPG, relate to the councils of Rojava in the same way the Bolshevists related to the councils of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, there are troubling pragmatic alliances, which have included collaboration with the U.S. military. Yet the people behind Rojava Solidarity NYC sum up the situation well:

Rojava, an autonomous region in Northern Syrian, the largest revolutionary territory of the 21st century, has projected anarchist and communist ideas to the forefront of political discourse and into the pragmatic and messy reality of everyday life. … From communal relationships to the councils and self-defense units, we can assess numerous potential routes by which we can create liberated communities at home, while learning from their possibilities and pitfalls.

Rojava won’t be the answer to our problems. No single struggle ever is. But the developments in Rojava challenge us to discuss real-life strategies for radical change. It is easy to focus on shortcomings, but if this is all we ever do, where will it get us?

Councils are essential for communist projects. Their power, which is based on the direct involvement and active participation of the masses, is curtailed as soon as political interest groups, such as parties, assume control over them. This conviction separated historical council communism, represented by figures such as Otto Rühle and Anton Pannekoek, from the Bolsheviks. Pannekoek wrote:

The councils are no government; not even the most central councils bear a governmental character. For they have no means to impose their will upon the masses; they have no organs of power. All social power is vested in the hands of the workers themselves.

Unless we want the transition to communism to entail enormous human suffering (which would be utterly absurd), we need to consider the fact that billions of people will need to be fed, sheltered, nursed, provided with access to clean water, and so forth. To produce according to the needs of the people rather than the needs of profit requires enormous efforts in planning, especially if current living standards are to be upheld. (Living standards don’t equal standards of consumption—the standards of consumption in the Global North cannot and should not be upheld, since they are unsustainable.) Furthermore, we must collectively dispose of industrial and nuclear waste, weapons of mass destruction, and ticking environmental bombs. None of this is possible without a level of centralization, no matter how visceral the reactions are that the word might provoke in some circles.

Only a council system can combine the centralization required by the complexity of modern societies with participative democracy. Centralization requires formal structures. Participative democracy requires these structures to be transparent. They need to be bottom-up rather than top-down, and delegates must be directly responsible to their constituencies. The council system is the only administrative framework to provide that.

Romanticizing particular struggles rarely does any good, no matter how council-based they are—or claim to be. If radicals in the Global North fail to address concerns with respect to struggles in the Global South, it is not respectful but condescending. To escape into the intellectual poverty of cultural relativism doesn’t help. We can only evolve from critical engagement. But real-life struggles are our starting point. It makes little sense to demand struggles for communism if we shy away from engaging with the ones that exist. Arundhati Roy put it simply after spending time with Maoist Naxalites in the forests of central India, an experience she chronicled in the book Walking with the Comrades. She said: “I went in because I wanted to tell the story of who these people are.” This informs revolutionary theory and, in turn, improves revolutionary practice. Most importantly, it is crucial for saving communist struggles from betraying their own principles. Everyone can watch failure unfold. The challenge lies in helping to prevent it.

## 2

#### Our interpretation is that the negative should only be burdened with rejoinder against affs that defend policy action related to an unconditional right to strike for workers.

#### Violation: the aff does not result in a change to policy regarding an unconditional right to strike from governmental engagement.

#### The first impact is aff-neg dialectics -- debate should center revolutionary potential but that can only occur when both sides are robustly prepared to engage in dialogue. This does not require that debate be solely competitive but it does require a problem-posing model that both sides can be prepared to respond to.

Scheuer, 21 [Robert Scheuer is a Social Ecologist from Southeast Michigan. He received a M.A. in Philosophy from Eastern Michigan University, and a B.A. in Philosophy from Michigan State University, “Dialogical Vanguard Pedagogy: Educate, Agitate, Awaken!,” 5/17/2021, Midwestern Marx]//Townes

​Most notably, methods of prescription are integral to the oppressed-oppressor relationship.[4] I find that this is a direct consequence of the way in which the ruling class manages any discourse that pertains to the knowledge, norms, and rules of how a society functions. Freire designates this as the “banking model” of education.[5] In the banking model, knowledge is considered to be a gift that is given from the teacher to the student. Consequently, the banking model of education enables the ruling class to narrate and dictate information to the oppressed, who in turn are only able to passively receive and listen to these commands. Ultimately, the banking model culminates into practices in which the ruling class acts as the teachers, while the oppressed are categorized as students who are to be controlled.

Additionally, in the banking model of education, the teacher narrates a certain set of content to their students. Here, the task of the teacher is to deposit into the students minds a series of fixed knowledge, norms, and rules, as if their minds were empty containers to be filled. In turn, the student’s job then is to record, memorize, and repeat the information given to them. These students are not permitted to reflect or engage with this content. In this model it is not for the student to ask why two times two equals four, but rather, only to know that it simply is four.[i] In light of this, the banking model can be said to be quite mechanistic in composition.

Subsequently, the ruling class has taken the banking model as the way in which the knowledge, norms, and rules of society are applied, presenting themselves as the teachers, while at the same time positioning the oppressed as their students. Anti-dialogical by its very nature, the banking model has been so successful for the ruling class because there is no room for any participation on the side of the oppressed, with the exception of absorbing what is dictated to them. As a result, the banking model does not allow the oppressed to actively participate and transform the world around them.

This makes the banking model a particularly dangerous pedagogical approach, as it allows the ruling class to place limitations on the rights and liberties that the oppressed can have. At best, political emancipation is the only form of freedom that can be advanced when the ruling class is permitted to act as teachers who have the exclusive authority to prescribe knowledge, norms, and rules. The ruling class utilizes these pedagogical tactics to ensure their complete control of all our social-political actions and behaviors. In this worldview, it is not for the oppressed to ask or challenge why we must continue to live in a capitalist society, but only to know that it simply is the case that we do.

With the backing of the banking model of education the ruling class is able to prohibit all potential revolutionary changes. Simply put, the ruling class uses the banking model to make the possibility of human emancipation untenable. However, it should be noted that a revolution is not a project in which one liberates another. The ruling class cannot and will not lead us in the struggle to overcome oppression. To believe the oppressors would liberate the oppressed is indeed a naive notion. This is why the oppressed must not rely on the knowledge given to them by the ruling class. As Freire attests, “Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift” (47). Emancipation cannot be gifted to the oppressed because the ruling class places strict limitations on what kind of emancipation can be achieved in their social-political system. Even though political emancipation has traditionally come from the ruling class by way of integrating citizens into their fold, there is no question that human emancipation cannot come from within this currently existing superstructure.

As such, the oppressed cannot use the State apparatus as a means of liberation. In the essay “The Civil War in France” Marx insists that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes” (Marx, 302). To put this another way, the oppressed cannot replace the bourgeois State with a proletariat State, as this would simply be a transference of domination. This would only amount to a substation of power and would not necessarily promote the end of oppression as such. Rather than reconstructing social-political power, an organization such as this merely rearranges it. Hence, the conditions of human emancipation would not be sufficiently met by the creation of a proletariat State. In sum, a full form of freedom cannot be achieved through the mere rearrangement of society, rather, it must be completely reconstructed anew.

The conditions needed for the total negation of alienation and exploitation requires the destruction of the oppressor State apparatus. On these grounds, Marx postulates two distinct movements that must occur prior to the actualization of a truly free and equal society. First, the bourgeois State must be smashed. This can be achieved through revolution. The second movement is the withering away of the new State.[6] But what does this mean and how does it happen? While there is no simple or singular answer to this riddle, it must be asserted that the withering away of the oppressor State can only happen when every person is given the opportunity to engage in dialogical discourse and action with one another.

With all of this in mind, I will now argue that any attempt to liberate the oppressed must involve their active and reflective participation in how society is shaped. For this reason, members of revolutionary vanguard leadership cannot rely on the same pedagogy used by the ruling class. According to Freire, the oppressed should not be dictated “liberatory” propaganda, nor can they be told what to think or how to act.[7] Instead, Freire asserts the best route to freedom occurs when there is constant and continual dialogue between all members of society. Revolutionary leaders cannot act as banking model teachers in relation to the oppressed, for they must instead enter into a co-intentional form of education with them. This is the only way to combat the contradictions that exist between the student and the teacher - the oppressed and the oppressor - as posited by the ruling class. Thus, communication should be acknowledged as having paramount significance for all matters concerning revolutionary liberation.

When dialogical discourse happens, both parties become teachers and students equiprimordially. As Freire states, “Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers” (Freire, 80). Freire calls this form of dialogue between teachers and students the “problem-posing model” of education.[8] As the problem-posing model is dialogical, it stands in direct contrast with the banking model. Whereas the banking model teacher prescribes information to students, the problem-posing teacher-student discovers knowledge alongside their fellow student-teachers. Freire says this about the problem-posing teacher-student, “Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other” (Freire, 80). Freire’s interpretation of a liberatory pedagogy therefore does not place the oppressed student as a passive listener, but rather, as a critical and active participant. Through dialogue, trust, and love the problem-posing model allows the student-teacher and the teacher-student to work together with one another as co-authors of knowledge, norms, and rules.

​Overall, education is dialogical if students can contribute to the discourse at hand and it is anti-dialogical when they cannot. Indeed, dialogical action necessitates the possibility of participation. In short, the “Banking education resists dialogue; problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality. Banking education treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers” (Freire, 83). This is valuable insight for those who are involved in the revolutionary struggle. From this interpretation we can see that when vanguard leaders fight apart from the oppressed it can only amount to fighting for liberation for themselves and not the people.

#### The second impact is tactical leadership --- defending a change in policy is a recognition that activism isn’t spontaneous but requires deep planning that emerges from tactical discussions about the use of the state as a temporary tool. The only way to constrain abuse is to inhabit the state so your enemies can’t.

Hardt and Negri, 17 [Michael Hardt is an American political philosopher and literary theorist. Hardt is best known for his book Empire, which was co-written with Antonio Negri AND Antonio "Toni" Negri is an Italian Spinozistic-Marxist sociologist and political philosopher, best known for his co-authorship of Empire and secondarily for his work on Spinoza, “Assembly,” 2017, Oxford University Press]//Townes

Whereas social movements and structures of democratic decision-making should chart the long-term course, leadership should be limited to short-term action and tied to specific occasions. Saying that leadership is tactical, and thus occasional, partial, and variable, then, does not mean that organization is not necessary. To the contrary, organizational issues require more attention but a new type of organization is necessary, one subordinated to and in service of the movements.

We will return later to analyze more fully the conception of tactical leadership, but for now we can simply indicate in general terms situations that require swift response, the most obvious of which involve threats of violence. Although many recent social movements have experimented with participatory decision-making on a large scale, we do not (yet) have adequate means to confront immediate problems in a democratic way. One type of threat that needs a tactical leadership can be grouped under the theme of counterpower: confronting the existing power structures, especially regarding questions of force and under the threat of violence, often requires prompt decisionmaking. It is irresponsible for even the most democratic street protest not to have a security team to protect activists against violence—to change the route, for example, when the police or thugs attack. The same need applies at a larger scale when progressive or revolutionary movements are threatened by the violence of oligarchies, death squads, media attacks, militias, right-wing reaction, and the like.

The issue becomes much more complex when we confront the traditional assumption that leadership is required for effective political organization and in order to sustain and guide institutions. As we said earlier, we view the needs for political organization and institutionalization to be not only still necessary but even greater than before. We will need to approach this from both sides. On the one hand, we will investigate how the multitude has become and can become capable of organizing politically and also of sustaining and innovating institutions; the multitude is achieving, for instance, an entrepreneurial role in society and politics (as well as in economic relations). On the other hand, when leadership structures are necessary within organizations and institutions their functioning must be limited to tactical judgments regarding how to apply the general social strategy in changing circumstances, and leadership must be completely subordinated to and submerged in the multitude.

You’re playing with fire, many of our friends will say—or simply deluding yourselves! You’ll never limit the power of leaders, even the honest ones. Once you give them a little, they will take more and more. How many times have you heard autocratic politicians claim they are merely servants of the people? How many times have you seen a political activist lifted up into a position of power by social movements only then arrogantly to rule over them? These friends are right that no legal safeguards or formal structures or divisions of power will effectively guard against the usurpation of power. This is ultimately a relation of force, even among allies. The only sure means to constrain leadership to a merely tactical role is for the multitude to occupy completely and firmly the strategic position and defend it at all costs. We should focus on developing the strategic capacities of the multitude, in other words, and limiting leadership to tactics will follow.

Strategic movements

To equate movements with strategy means that the movements already have (or can develop) adequate knowledge of the social reality and can plot their own long-term political direction. We must recognize, on the one hand, the knowledges and organizational capacities that people already possess and, on the other, what is necessary for the entire multitude to participate actively in the construction and implementation of lasting political projects. People do not need to be given the party line to inform and guide their practice. They have the potential to recognize their oppression and know what they want.

The capacities for strategy that are already widespread in social movements are often not immediately evident. A good first step toward unearthing them is to demystify the concept of “spontaneity.” Distrust anyone who calls a social movement or a revolt spontaneous. Belief in spontaneity, in politics as in physics, is based simply on an ignorance of causes—and, for our purposes, ignorance of the existing social organization from which it emerges. When in February 1960, for instance, four young black men sat at the whites-only lunch counter of a Woolworth’s in Greensboro, North Carolina, and refused to leave, journalists and many academics described it as a spontaneous protest—and from the outside it certainly appeared to come from nowhere. But when you look within the movement, as Aldon Morris argues, you can see the rich organizational structures from which it emerged, including student associations, church and community groups, and sections of the NAACP, as well as the cycle of sit-in protests that spread throughout the US South in the 1950s. The Greensboro sit-in was not spontaneous but an expression of a broad network of ongoing organizational activity.11 The same is true of many workers’ struggles throughout Europe in the 1960s and ’70s, which the dominant trade unions and party leaders called “spontaneous” in order to discredit them. They too, however, were the fruit of continuous, tireless agitation inside and outside the factories.12 Belief in spontaneity is an ideological position— ignorance is never really innocent—that serves (consciously or not) to eclipse and discredit the work, knowledge, and organizational structures that stand behind events of protest and revolt. We need to investigate the structures and experiences from which “spontaneity” arises and reveal what those social bodies can do.13

To discover how widespread capacities for strategy are, however, we have to look beyond activist organizations and beyond the realm of politics; we need to delve into the social terrain. For this reason, in parts II and III we will descend from the realm of politics to investigate the social and economic relationships of cooperation that constitute contemporary society. Only in this way will we be able to gauge accurately people’s current capacities, to recognize the existing wealth but also the deficiencies, and thus to plot what must be done.

Toward a new problem The inversion of strategy and tactics promises (or alludes to) a substantially new problem. Rather than posing the proper relationship between the masses and leadership, spontaneity and centralism, democracy and authority, as do the theories of the modern revolutionary, progressive, and liberal traditions, this inversion fundamentally alters the meaning of the two poles and thus transforms the entire political paradigm. Action of the multitude is (or must be) no longer tactical, short-sighted, and blind to the general social interest. The calling (Beruf) of the multitude is strategic. And, correspondingly, leadership must become something fundamentally different: a weapon to wield and dispose of as the occasion dictates.