# Princeton r2

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#### Recognizing a right to strike reduces revolutionary potential and fractures class organizing – turns the perm.

Crépon 19 Mark Crépon (French philosopher), translated by Micol Bez “The Right to Strike and Legal War in Walter Benjamin’s ‘Toward the Critique of Violence,’” Critical Times, 2:2, August 2019, DOI 10.1215/26410478-7708331

If we wish to understand how the question of the right to strike arises for Walter Benjamin in the seventh paragraph of his essay “Zur Kritik der Gewalt,” it is impor­ tant to first analyze the previous paragraph, which concerns the state’s monopoly on violence. It is here that Benjamin questions the argument that such a monopoly derives from the impossibility of a system of legal ends to preserve itself as long as the pursuit of natural ends through violent means remains. Benjamin responds to this dogmatic thesis with the following hypothesis, arguably one of his most impor­ tant reflections: “To counter it, one would perhaps have to consider the surprising possibility that law’s interest in monopolizing violence vis­à­vis the individual is explained by the intention not of preserving legal ends, but rather of preserving law itself. [This is the possibility] that violence, when it does not lie in the hands of law, poses a danger to law, not by virtue of the ends that it may pursue but by virtue of its mere existence outside of law.”1 In other words, nothing would endanger the law more than the possibility of its authority being contested by a violence over which it has no control. The function of the law would therefore be, first and foremost, to contain violence within its own boundaries. It is in this context that, to demonstrate this surprising hypothesis, Benjamin invokes two examples: the right to strike guaranteed by the state and the law of war. Let us return to the place that the right to strike occupies within class struggle. To begin with, the very idea of such a struggle implies certain forms of violence. The strike could then be understood as one of the recognizable forms that this violence can take. However, this analytical framework is undermined as soon as this form of violence becomes regulated by a “right to strike,” such as the one recognized by law in France in 1864. What this recognition engages is, in fact, the will of the state to control the possible “violence” of the strike. Thus, the “right” of the right to strike appears as the best, if not the only, way for the state to circumscribe within (and via) the law the relative violence of class struggles. We might consider this to be the per­ fect illustration of the aforementioned hypothesis. Yet, there are two lines of ques­ tioning that destabilize this hypothesis that we would do well to consider. First, is it legitimate to present the strike as a form of violence? Who has a vested interest in such a representation? In other words, how can we trace a clear and unequivocal demarcation between violence and nonviolence? Are we not always bound to find residues of violence, even in those actions that we would be tempted to consider nonviolent? The second line of questioning is just as important and is rooted in the distinction established by Georges Sorel, in his Reflections on Violence, between the “political strike” and the “proletarian general strike,” to which Benja­ min dedicates a set of complementary analyses in §13 of his essay. Here, again, we are faced with a question of limits. What is at stake is the possibility for a certain type of strike (the proletarian general strike) to exceed the limits of the right to strike— turning, in other words, the right to strike against the law itself. The phenomenon is that of an autoimmune process, in which the right to strike that is meant to protect the law against the possible violence of class strugles is transformed into a means for the destruction of the law. The diference between the two types of strikes is nevertheless introduced with a condition: “The validity of this statement, however, is not unrestricted because it is not unconditional,” notes Benjamin in §7. We would be mistaken in believing that the right to strike is granted and guaranteed uncondi­ tionally. Rather, it is structurally subjected to a conflict of interpretations, those of the workers, on the one hand, and of the state on the other. From the point of view of the state, the partial strike cannot under any circumstance be understood as a right to exercise violence, but rather as the right to extract oneself from a preexisting (and verifiable) violence: that of the employer. In this sense, the partial strike should be considered a nonviolent action, what Benjamin named a “pure means.” The interpretations diverge on two main points. The first clearly depends on the alleged “violence of the employer,” a predicate that begs the question: Who might have the authority to recognize such violence? Evidently it is not the employer. The danger is that the state would similarly lack the incentive to make such a judgment call. It is nearly impossible, in fact, to find a single instance of a strike in which this recognition of violence was not subject to considerable controversy. The political game is thus the following: the state legislated the right to strike in order to con­ tain class strugles, with the condition that workers must have “good reason” to strike. However, it is unlikely that a state systematically allied with (and accomplice to) employers will ever recognize reasons as good, and, as a consequence, it will deem any invocation of the right to strike as illegitimate. Workers will therefore be seen as abusing a right granted by the state, and in so doing transforming it into a violent means. On this point, Benjamin’s analyses remain extremely pertinent and profoundly contemporary. They unveil the enduring strategy of governments confronted with a strike (in education, transportation, or healthcare, for example) who, afer claiming to understand the reasons for the protest and the grievances of the workers, deny that the arguments constitute sufcient reason for a strike that will likely paralyze this or that sector of the economy. They deny, in other words, that the conditions denounced by the workers display an intrinsic violence that jus­ tifies the strike. Let us note here a point that Benjamin does not mention, but that is part of Sorel’s reflections: this denial inevitably contaminates the (socialist) lef once it gains power. What might previously have seemed a good reason to strike when it was the opposition is deemed an insufcient one once it is the ruling party. In the face of popular protest, it always invokes a lack of sufcient rationale, allow­ ing it to avoid recognizing the intrinsic violence of a given social or economic situ­ ation, or of a new policy. And it is because it refuses to see this violence and to take responsibility for it that the left regularly loses workers’ support.

#### Capitalism is a death cult and the apocalypse is already happening. Without an unshakable commitment to the total and complete rejection of the fetishization capitalist value, we will all die like the dinosaurs, Allinson 21

Allinson, J. (2021). *The tragedy of the worker: towards the proletarocene*. Verso Books. pg 8-17

Capitalism, like certain bacteria, like the death-drive, is immortal. It has its limits and crises but, perversely, seems to *thrive* on these. Unlike the multi- species life-systems powering it, **the only *terminal* limit to capital’s perpetual augmentation is**, if driven towards from within, external: **either revolution or human extinction**; communism, or the common ruin of the contending classes. Long ago, both Max Weber and Walter Benjamin saw an occulted religious foundation in capitalist civilisation. As Michael Löwy points out, Benjamin, by defining capitalism as a cultic religion, went much farther than Weber in identifying a Puritan/Capitalist guilt-driven imperative to accumulate. ‘The duration of the cult’, for Benjamin, ‘is permanent’. There are ‘no days which are not holidays’, and ‘nothing has meaning that is not immediately related to the cult’. In what sense is capitalism a cult? What are its rituals, its fetishes? Those of investment, speculating, buying and selling. It has no dogma other than those ‘real abstractions’, as Alfred Sohn-Rethel put it, entailed by its rituals. In Sohn-Rethel’s words, the act of commodityexchange is the key exemplar of a social action governed by an abstraction of which the participants have no consciousness. The buyer may be concerned only with the sensuous particularities of the commodity, the needs it fills, but behaves, structurally, in the moment of exchange as though what matters is the quantity of exchange-value embedded in it. Ritual action determines dogma; social being, that is, determines consciousness. Capitalist theology, however, instates not dogma but unyielding imperatives governing action. ‘Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!’, Marx sarcastically withered in *Capital.* **Accumulation is, for capital, an imperative, not an option**. To exist as a unit of capital in conditions of universal competition is to accumulate or die. As long, therefore, as there is labour-power to exploit and, in Jason W Moore’s term, ‘cheap nature’ to appropriate, capital will augment itself. This very bifurcation of life into the exploitable and the appropriable, which Moore identifies as the foundation of a ‘Cartesian dualism’ unsustainably counterposing ‘Nature’ to ‘Society’, is not dogma but programme. It is related to a distinctive move of capitalist theology, currently given right- Evangelical sanction by Calvin Beisner and the Cornwall Declaration, to disavow in practice the existence of inherent physical limits. It posits, in its action, the earth as limitless cornucopia over which humans have dominion, and from which limitless accumulation must be extracted. This disavowal, this ‘real abstraction’, is the social basis of capitalist *implicatory denial:* the seemingly evidence-proof conviction of capitalist states that capitalogenic climate change can be remedied by means, and according to systems, that guarantee its perpetuation. The capitalocentric purview is commonly, but mistakenly, identified with the anthropocentrism of ancient and medieval monotheisms. Here, however, it is clearly *not* the Anthropos that stands at the centre, as though appointed by God to steward the garden of earth. At the centre is the ritual: that unconditional imperative to accumulate. And insofar as this imperative drives ‘adorers’, as Benjamin put it, to the horizon of human extinction, **capitalism** can – **must** – **be described as a death** **cult**. **Fossil capital** **is** but **one modality of** **the death cult**, albeit a paragon. **The ‘externalities’ of capital – climate chaos, biosphere destruction, resource depletion, topsoil erosion, ocean acidification, mass extinction, the accumulation of chemical, heavy metal, biological and nuclear wastes – extend far beyond the specific catastrophe of a carbonised atmosphere.** Capitalism is a comprehensive system of work-energetics. The food industry, which powers waged labour, and is key to the shifting value of labour-power itself, is as central to the deterioration of the biosphere as is fossil-fuelled transit. Nonetheless, the continuing decision for fossil fuels as a solution to the energy demands of capitalist production, for all the growing denial of climate-change denial among the antivulgarian ruling class, for all their concerned mouth music, is an exemplary case of the capitalist imperative of competitive accumulation at work. As Andreas Malm has fiercely and beautifully argued, **capitalism did not settle for fossil fuels as a solution to energy scarcity. The common assumption that fossil energy is an *intrinsically* valuable energy resource worth competing over**, and fighting wars for **is**, as geographer Matthew Huber argues, **an example of fetishism. At the onset of steam power, water was abundant, and, even with its fixed costs, cheaper to use than coal.** The hydraulic mammoths powered by water wheels required far less human labour to convert to energy, and were more energy-efficient. **Even today, only a third of the energy in coal is actually converted in the industrial processes dedicated thereto: the only thing that is efficiently produced is carbon dioxide. On such basis, the striving for competitive advantage by capitalists seeking maximum market control ‘should’ have favoured renewable energy.** Capital, however, preferred the spatio-temporal profile of stocks due to the internal politics of competitive accumulation. **Water use necessitated communal administration, with its perilously collectivist implications**. Coal, and later oil, could be transported to urban centres, where workers were acculturated to the work-time of capitalist industry, and hoarded by individual enterprises. This allowed individual units of capital to compete more effectively with one another, secured the political authority of capital and incorporated workers into atomised systems of reproduction, from transport to heating.  **Thus, locked in by the short-termist imperatives of competitive accumulation, fossil capital assumed a politically privileged position within an emerging world capitalist ecology**. It monopolised the supply of energy for dead labour, albeit in a highly inefficient way. This is the tragedy of the worker. That, as avatar of a class in itself, she was put to work for the accumulation of capital, from capitalism’s youth, amid means of production not of her choosing, and with a telos of ecological catastrophe. **That thus, even should the proletariat become a class for itself, and even if it does so at a point of history where the full horror of the methods of fossil capitalism is becoming clear, it would – will – inherit productive forces inextricable from mass, trans-species death. This does not preclude systemic, planet-wide transformatio**n. Particularly given the inevitably uneven global growth of class consciousness and resistance, however, and the concomitant embattledness of any reformist, let alone revolutionary, power on the global stage, **it does ensure that it faces extraordinary barriers**. As will become clear**. As of 2015, estimates suggested that humanity produced a total of 15.5 trillion watts of energy each year, of which a considerable 29 per cent was not used**. At an average of 2,000 watts per person (rising to 10,000 watts in the core capitalist economies), the majority was used for industry, commerce and transit, with only 22 per cent for household consumption. Some 90 per cent of this output was powered by fossil fuels: oil, coal, gas. This monopoly, enabling superprofits as monopolies do, ensured that fossil capital would always realise profit margins far higher than the industrial average. It has, in Malm’s term, become worth a ‘planet of value’. Each fossil fuel plant represents decades of investment awaiting realisation.  **To avert planetary disaster is to inflict an earth-sized blow on capitalist industry. It is to choose between burning a planet of value, and burning the planet itself.** But the death cult is so strong, so pervasive, that, against all resistance, the choice has already been made. **Apocalypse has begun. The button has been pushed**. Humanity is already committed to irreversible climate change. In May of 2020, levels of CO2 in the atmosphere hit 417 parts per million, the highest ever recorded – and the first breach of 400 ppm since the Pliocene. Climate activists are, in Richard Wilbur’s phrase, ‘mad-eyed from stating the obvious’. To understand the scale of what faces us, and the way it ramifies into every corner of our lives, is to marvel that we aren’t having emergency meetings in every city, town and village every week. **We are, increasingly, out of time. In** the capitalist *untimelich,* the time of the living and the time of the dead, human history and the history of inorganic sediments, collide. ‘Millions of years of concentrated solar energy’, as Huber calls it, have been released in an historical blink of an eye, only to rebound just as fast: the Deep Time equivalent of an asteroid strike. **The cyclical time of seasons turns freakish, leaving us uneasily sweating in the clammy mid-winter. Spring comes too early, hurricane-force winds and flash floods break the October calm, polar ice melts while temperate zones are plunged into polar winter. The Arctic burns, boreal forests turned to charred sticks. The Greenland ice sheet melts even in winter. Antarctic sea ice has suddenly and drastically contracted in recent** **years**. The polar vortex wanders, perturbed, and the mid-West freezes. In a parody of Revelations, Mediterranean storms rain fish on the island of Malta. **Stochastic weather events accumulate. Birds fall dead from the sky.** The progression of geological deep time, with its periods, eras and epochs speeds up so rapidly that it precipitates a crisis in the temporal order itself: spinning so fast, we may as well be standing still. The progressive time of human civilisation, reduced to the endless accumulation of stuff, collapses into nonsense. The cycle of ice ages, a necessary condition for human evolution, melts away for eternity. With awareness of which comes a wave of eco-anxiety, for which we grope for names – Glenn Albrecht’s ‘solastalgia’, Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville Ellis’s ‘ecological grief’, Renee Lertzmann’s ‘environmental melancholia’. Even at the end of 2018, 70 per cent of Americans describing themselves as ‘worried’ about climate change, and it has been a long two years for that fear to wax. **The sixth mass extinction, signalled by what one study calls ‘biological annihilation’, is underway**. **The oceans, which produce roughly half of the oxygen we breathe, are acidifying, and are swept by heatwaves, says a recent study, ‘like wildfire’. Coral reefs, home to a quarter of marine life, are bleaching. Insect biomass collapses, with 40 per cent of all species undergoing drastic decline**. **The bees, that once we believed were saved, are disappearing eight times faster than are mammals, birds or reptiles. Without their pollination work, 70 per cent of the crops that feed 90 per cent of the planet will fail**. **The question of human survival is inextricable from that of what sort of humans we should be. By 2070, MIT research says, the new norm for ‘many billions’ of people will be impossibly high temperatures that will kill less fit people and make outdoor work impossible. Half a billion will experience temperatures that would ‘kill even healthy people in the shade within six hours’**. **The Arctic, that ‘sluggish and congealed sea’ discovered by Pytheas, a breathing ‘mixture like sea-lung’, will be gone, on conservative estimates by 2040.** In 2019, the usually snow-bowed woodlands circling this uncanny sea-continent burned more fiercely than ever. Precise metrics of the scale of what will unfold are to be determined, not least by class struggle, but there is no longer, if there ever was, a choice between adaptation and mitigation. **So adapt. But to what?** Those species now going extinct were once well adapted. The widely accepted geo-logism, ‘Anthropocene’, is in one sense an obvious political evasion, diluting as it does the necessary focus on capital accumulation itself. Yet, of course, capitalism is something that the human species, and no other, does. And while there are unthinkably vast disparities in power and responsibility in the production of petro-modernity, the latter has had a proven – if, crucially, hardly irrevocable – popular base: the vatic rage of activists notwithstanding, no politician has been crucified for promising fuel tax cuts. This fact can easily be weaponised by the right. Of the recent protests of the gilets jaunes in France against declining wages and rising inequality and sparked by a rise in diesel tax later reversed by Macron faced by the scale of the protests, Trump tweeted that ‘[p]eople do not want to pay large sums of money ... in order to maybe protect the environment’. In fact, however, and allowing that the movement is hardly monolithic, the French uprising was characterised by a remarkable *refusal to refuse* to engage with questions of ecology, particularly compared, say, to the fuel- price protests in the UK in 2000 and 2005. Far from being characterised by ecological indifference, what characterised much of the French protest was disagreement between those for whom talk of ecology comes too soon, and those for whom such talk is inextricable from social – class – justice. One example of the former is visible in the claim of the prominent activist Jerôme Rodriguez that ‘[e]ventually, when we obtain the first things, ecology will have its place’; of the latter, the words of another, François Boulot, that ‘[t]he social and ecological emergencies are inseparable’, that ‘[w]e will not be able to operate the ecological transition without an equitable wealth redistribution’. Rodriguez’s rationale for his position, that ‘nowadays, people aren’t concentrated on this’, is not supported by the superlative gilets jaunes slogans, ‘End of the month, end of the world: same perpetrators, same fight’, and ‘More ice sheets, fewer bankers’. This refusal to compartmentalise is energising evidence of the new politicisation of the moment. Still, that not everyone opposed to the fuel tax rise has been so assiduous in drawing the connections is in part because the dispersed, privatised accommodation and individualised transportation of modern life offer individualised, immediate-term and distinctively capitalist answer to specifically human strivings. The concept of the Anthropocene is a tacit acknowledgment that the alienated labour of humanity has itself become a selective evolutionary pressure. It has already forced rapid adaptation in some species, where it has not resulted in extinction, as Bernard Kettlewell’s experiments with peppered moths show. The besooting of tree bark in industrial areas became a powerful selective force, favouring darker moths, harder for birds to see and pick off**. Now such pressures are coming for us, as powerful as the asteroid strike behind the Cretaceous-Paleogene mass extinction. We are compelled to adapt to ourselves.** From this point of view, there is no difference between adaptation and mitigation. **To close the fossil fuel plants, to destroy a planet of value, or even, dare we hope, the value-form itself:** are these not adaptations**?** Of course, this is not what is generally meant by adaptation. Implicit is a Green Zone-style survivalism of the rich; explicitly touted are permanent adaptations of capitalism to the consequences of capitalism. The ideology of ‘adaptation’ has become the ideology of capitalism’s triumph over all life.

#### The alternative is the politics of the comrade – one that is oriented toward a shared communist horizon – only our methodology can fight capitalism, anything else allows it to take over co-opting any movement – Dean 19:

Dean, Jodi. Comrade: An essay on political belonging. Verso, 2019. // LHP BT + LHP PS

The term ***comrade* indexes a political relation, a set of expectations for action toward a common goal**. **It highlights the sameness of those on the same side—no matter their differences, comrades stand together**. As Obama’s joke implies, when you share a politics, you don’t generally distance yourself from your comrades. **Comradeship binds action**, **and in** this binding, **this solidarity, it** collectivizes and **directs action in light of a shared vision for the future**. **For communists, this is the egalitarian future of a society emancipated from the determinations of private property and capitalism and reorganized according to the free association, common benefit, and collective decisions of the producers.** But the term comrade predates its use by communists and socialists. In romance languages, comrade first appears in the sixteenth century to designate one who shares a room with another. Juan A. Herrero Brasas cites a Spanish historical-linguistic dictionary’s definition of the term: “*Camarada* is someone who is so close to another man that he eats and sleeps in the same house with him.”[2](about:blank) In French, the term was originally feminine, *camarade*, and referred to a barracks or room shared by soldiers.[3](about:blank) Etymologically, comrade derives from *camera*, the Latin word for room, chamber, and vault. The technical connotation of *vault* indexes a generic function, the structure that produces a particular space and holds it open.[4](about:blank) A chamber or room is a repeatable structure that takes its form by producing an inside separate from an outside and providing a supported cover for those underneath it. Sharing a room, sharing a space, generates a closeness, an intensity of feeling and expectation of solidarity that differentiates those on one side from those on the other. Comradeship is a political relation of supported cover. Interested in comrade as a mode of address, carrier of expectations, and figure of belonging in the communist and socialist traditions, I emphasize **the comrade as a generic figure for the political relation between those on the same side of a political struggle. Comrades are those who  tie themselves together instrumentally, for a common purpose: *If we want to win—and we have to win—we must act together*.** As Angela Davis describes her decision to join the Communist Party:I wanted an anchor, a base, a mooring. I needed comrades with whom I could share a common ideology. I was tired of ephemeral ad-hoc groups that fell apart when faced with the slightest difficulty; tired of men who measured their sexual height by women’s intellectual genuflection. It wasn’t that I was fearless, but I knew that to win, we had to fight and the fight that would win was the one collectively waged by the masses of our people and working people in general. I knew that this fight had to be led by a group, a party with more permanence in its membership and structure and substance in its ideology.[5](about:blank) **Comrades are those you can count on. You share enough of a common ideology,** enough of a commitment to common principles and goals, **to do more than one-off actions. Together you can fight the long fight. As comrades, our actions are voluntary, but they are not always of our own choosing**. **Comrades have to be able to count on each other even when we don’t like each other and even when we disagree. We do what needs to be done because we owe it to our comrades.** In *The Romance of American Communism*, Vivian Gornick reports the words of a former member of the Communist Party USA, or CPUSA, who hated the daily grind of selling papers and canvassing expected of party cadre, but nevertheless, according to her, “I did it. I did it because if I didn’t do it, I couldn’t face my comrades the next day. And we all did it for the same reason: we were accountable to each other.”[6](about:blank) Put in psychoanalytic terms, the comrade functions as an ego ideal: the point from which party members assess themselves as doing important, meaningful work.[7](about:blank)Being accountable to another entails seeing your actions through their eyes. Are you letting them down or are you doing work that they respect and admire?In *Crowds and Party*, I present the good comrade as an ideal ego, that is to say, as how party members imagine themselves.[8](about:blank) They may imagine themselves as thrilling orators, brilliant polemicists, skilled organizers, or courageous militants. In contrast with my discussion there, in the current book, I draw out how **the comrade** **also functions as an ego ideal, the perspective that party members—and often fellow travelers—take toward themselves**. This perspective is the effect of belonging on the same side as it works back on those who have committed themselves to common struggle. The comrade is a symbolic as well as an imaginary figure and it is the symbolic dimension of ego ideal I focus on here. My thinking about the comrade as a generic figure for those on the same side flows out of my work on communism as the horizon of left politics and my work on the party as the political form necessary for this politics.[9](about:blank) **To see our political horizon as communist is to highlight the emancipatory egalitarian struggle of the proletarianized against capitalist exploitation—that is, against the determination of life by market forces; by value; by the division of labor (on the basis of sex and race); by imperialism (theorized by Lenin in terms of the dominance of monopoly and finance capital); and by neocolonialism (theorized by Nkrumah as the last stage of imperialism).** **Today we see this horizon in struggles such as those led by women of color against police violence, white supremacy, and the murder and incarceration of black, brown, and working-class people. We see it in the infrastructure battles around pipelines, climate justice, and barely habitable cities with undrinkable water and contaminated soil. We see it in the array of social reproduction struggles against debt, foreclosure, and privatization, and for free, quality public housing, childcare, education, transportation, healthcare, and other basic services. We see it in the ongoing fight of LGBTQ people against harassment, discrimination, and oppression.** It is readily apparent today that **the communist horizon is the horizon of political struggle** not for the nation but **for the world**; it is an international horizon. This is evident in the antagonism between the rights of immigrants and refugees and intensified nationalisms; in the necessity of a global response to planetary warming; and in anti-imperialist, decolonization, and peace movements. In these examples, **communism is a force of negativity, the negation of the global capitalist present.** **Communism is also the name for the positive alternative to capitalism’s permanent and expanding exploitation, crisis, and immiseration, the name of a system of production based on meeting social needs**—*from each according to ability to each according to need*, to paraphrase Marx’s famous slogan—in a way that is collectively determined and carried out by the producers. This positive dimension of communism attends to social relations, to how people treat each other, animals, things, and the world around them**. Building communism entails more than resistance and riot. It requires the emancipated egalitarian organization of collective life.** With respect to the party, intellectuals on the contemporary left tend to extract the party from the aspirations and accomplishments it enabled. Communist philosophers who disagree on a slew of theoretical questions, such as Antonio Negri and Alain Badiou, converge on the organizational question—no party! **The party has been rejected as authoritarian**, as outmoded, as ill-fitting a society of networks. **Every other mode of political association may be revised, renewed, rethought, or reimagined except for the party of communists**. **This rejection of the party** as a form for left politics is a mistake. It **ignores the effects of association on those engaged in common struggle.** **It fails to learn from the everyday experiences of generations of activists**, organizers, and revolutionaries. **It relies on a narrow, fantasied notion of the party as a totalitarian machine.** It neglects the courage, enthusiasm, and achievements of millions of party members for over a century. **Rejection of the party form has been left dogmatism** for the last thirty years **and has gotten us nowhere**. Fortunately, the movements of the squares in Greece and Spain, as well as lessons from the successes and limits of the Occupy movement, have pushed against this left dogmatism. They have reenergized interest in the party as a political form that can scale; a form that is flexible, adaptive, and expansive enough to endure beyond the joyous and disruptive moments of crowds in the streets. A theory of the comrade contributes to this renewal by drawing out the ways that shared commitment to a common struggle generates new strengths and new capacities. Over and against the reduction of party relations to the relations between the leaders and the led, comrade attends to the effects of political belonging on those on the same side of a political struggle. **As we fight together for a world free of exploitation, oppression, and bigotry, we have to be able to trust and count on each other. Comrade names this relation. The comrade relation remakes the place from which one sees, what it is possible to see, and what possibilities can appear**. It enables the revaluation of work and time, what one does, and for whom one does it. Is one’s work done for the people or for the bosses? Is it voluntary or done because one has to work? Does one work for personal provisions or for a collective good? We should recall Marx’s lyrical description of communism in which work becomes “life’s prime want.” We get a glimpse of that in comradeship: **one *wants* to do political work**. **You don’t want to let down your comrades**; you see the value of your work through their eyes, your new collective eyes. **Work, determined not by markets but by shared commitments, becomes fulfilling**. French communist philosopher and militant Bernard Aspe discusses the problem of contemporary capitalism as a loss of “common time”; that is, the loss of an experience of time generated and enjoyed through our collective being-together.[10](about:blank) From holidays, to meals, to breaks, whatever common time we have is synchronized and enclosed in forms for capitalist appropriation. Communicative capitalism’s apps and trackers amplify this process such that the time of consumption can be measured in much the same way that Taylorism measured the time of production: How long did a viewer spend on a particular web page? Did a person watch a whole ad or click off of it after five seconds? In contrast, the common action that is the actuality of communist movement induces a collective change in capacities. Breaking from capitalism’s 24-7 injunctions to produce and consume for the bosses and owners, the discipline of common struggle expands possibilities for action and intensifies the sense of its necessity. The comrade is a figure for the relation through which this transformation of work and time occurs. **How do we imagine political work? Under conditions where political change seems completely out of reach, we might imagine political work as self-transformation**. At the very least, we can work on ourselves. In the intensely mediated networks of communicative capitalism, we might see our social media engagements as a kind of activism where Twitter and Facebook function as important sites of struggle. Perhaps we understand writing as important political work and hammer out opinion pieces, letters to the editors, and manifestoes. When we imagine political work, we often take electoral politics as our frame of reference, focusing on voting, lawn signs, bumper stickers, and campaign buttons. Or we think of activists as those who arrange phone banks, canvass door-to-door, and set up rallies. In yet another political imaginary, we might envision political work as study, whether done alone or with others. We might imagine political work as cultural production, the building of new communities, spaces, and ways of seeing. Our imaginary might have a militant, or even militarist, inflection: political work is carried out through marches, occupations, strikes, and blockades; through civil disobedience, direct action, and covert operations. Even with the recognition of the wide array of political activities, the ways people use them to respond to specific situations and capacities, and how they combine to enhance each other, we might still imagine radical political work as punching a Nazi in the face.Throughout these various actions and activities, how are the relations among those fighting on the same side imagined? How do the activists and organizers, militants and revolutionaries relate to one another? During the weeks and months when the Occupy movement was at its peak, relations with others were often infused with a joyous sense of being together, with an enthusiasm for the collective co-creation of new patterns of action and ways of living.[11](about:blank) But the feeling didn’t last. **The pressures of organizing diverse people and politics under conditions of police repression and real material need wore down even the most committed activists.** Since then, on social media and across the broader left, **relations among the politically engaged have again become tense and conflicted, often along lines of race and gender. Dispersed and disorganized, we’re uncertain of whom to trust and what to expect. We encounter contradictory injunctions to self-care and call out. Suspicion undermines support. Exhaustion displaces enthusiasm**. **Attention to comradeship, to the ways that shared expectations make political work not just possible but also gratifying, may help redirect our energies back to our common struggle.** As former CPUSA member David Ross explained to Gornick:I knew that I could never feel passionately about the new movements as I had about the old, I realized that the CP has provided me with a sense of comradeship I would never have again, and that without that comradeship I could *never* be political.[12](about:blank)For Ross, the Communist Party is what made Marxism. The party gave Marxism life, political purpose. This life-giving capacity came from comradeship. Ross continues: “The idea of politics as simply a diffused consciousness linked only to personal integrity was—*is*—anathema to me.” His description of politics as “a diffused consciousness linked only to personal integrity” fits today’s left milieus. Perhaps, then, his remedy—comradeship—will as well. Various people have told me their stories of feeling a rush of warmth when they were first welcomed into their party as a comrade. I’ve had this feeling myself. In his memoir *Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid*, the theorist Frank Wilderson, a former member of uMkhonto weSizwe, or MK, the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC), describes his first meeting with Chris Hani, the leader of the South African Communist Party and the chief of staff of MK. Wilderson writes, “I beamed like a schoolboy when he called me ‘comrade.’”[13](about:blank) Wilderson chides himself for what he calls a “childish need for recognition.”[14](about:blank) Perhaps because he still puts Hani on a pedestal, he feels exposed in his enjoyment of the egalitarian disruption of comradeship. Wilderson hasn’t yet internalized the idea that he and Hani are political equals. “Comrade” **holds out an equalizing promise, and when that promise is fulfilled, we confront our own continuing** yet **unwanted attachments to hierarchy, prestige, inadequacy. Accepting equality takes courage.** Wilderson’s joy in hearing Hani call him “comrade” contrasts sharply with another instance Wilderson recounts where comrade was the term of address**. In 1994, shortly before Wilderson was forced to leave South Africa, he encountered Nelson Mandela** at an event hosted by *Tribute*magazine. **After Mandela’s public remarks, Wilderson asked a question in which he addressed Mandela as “comrade.”** “Not Mr. Mandela. Not sir, like the fawning advertising mogul who asked the first question. **Comrade Mandela. It stitched him back into the militant garb he’d shed since the day he left prison.”**[15](about:blank) **Wilderson’s recollection shows how comrade’s equalizing insistence can be aggressive, an imposition of discipline. This is part of its power. Addressing another as “comrade” reminds them that something is expected of them. Discipline and joy are two sides of the same coin**, two aspects of comradeship as a mode of political belonging. As a form of address, figure of political relation, and carrier of expectations, comrade **disrupts capitalist society’s hierarchical identifications of sex, race, and class.** It **insists on** the **equalizing sameness of those on the same side of a political struggle** and **renders that** equalizing sameness **productive of new modes of work and belonging. In this respect, comrade is a carrier of utopian longings** in the sense theorized by Kathi Weeks. Weeks presents **the utopian form** as **carrying out two functions**: “One function is to alter our connection to the present, while the other is to shift our relationship to the future; one is productive of estrangement, the other of hope.”[16](about:blank) **The first function mobilizes the negativity of disidentification and disinvestment**. **Present relations** **become** strange, **less binding on our sense of possibility**. The second function **redirects “our attention and energies toward an open future** … providing a vision or glimmer of a better world.”[17](about:blank) **The power of comrade is in how it negates old relations and promises new ones—the promise itself ushers them in,** welcoming the new comrade into relations irreducible to their broader setting.

#### The role of the ballot is fidelity to the truth – dedication to a shared horizon is liberatory, Dean 19:

Dean, Jodi. Comrade: An essay on political belonging. Verso, 2019. // LHP BT + LHP PS

The idea that comrades are those who belong to the same side of a political struggle leads to the fourth thesis: **The** relation between comrades is mediated by **fidelity to a** truth**;** practices **of comradeship** materialize **this** fidelity**. The “same side” points to the truth comrades are faithful to—the political truth that unites them**—**and the fidelity with which they work to realize this truth in the world.** “Belonging” invites attention to the expectations, practices, and affects that being on the same side generates. The notions of truth and fidelity at work here come from Alain Badiou. In brief, **Badiou rejects the idea of truth as a proposition or judgment, arguing instead that** truth is a process**. The process begins with the eruption of something new, an event.** **Because an event changes the situation, breaks the confines of the given, it is undecidable in terms of the given; it is something entirely new**. Badiou argues that this undecidability “induces the appearance of a *subject* of the event.”[60](about:blank) **This subject isn’t the cause of the event. It’s an effect of or response to the event,** “the decision to *say* that the event has taken place.” Grammar might seduce us into rendering this subject as “I.” **We should** avoid this temptation and **recognize the subject** **as** designating an inflection point, **a response that extends the event.** **The decision that a truth has appeared, that an event has occurred, incites a process of verification**, the “infinite procedure of verification of the true,” **in** **what Badiou calls an “exercise of fidelity**.”[61](about:blank) **Fidelity is a working out and working through of the truth, an engagement with truth that extends out into and changes the world. We should recognize here the unavoidably collective dimension of fidelity: in the political field, verification is a struggle of the many.** Peter Hallward draws out some implications of Badiou’s conception of truth. First, it is subjective. Those faithful to an evental truth involve themselves in working it out, exploring its consequences.[62](about:blank) Second, fidelity is not blind faith; it is rigorous engagement unconcerned with individual personality and incorporated into the body of truth that it generates. Hallward writes:Fidelity is, by definition, ex-centric, directed outward, beyond the limits of a merely personal integrity. To be faithful to an evental implication always means to abandon oneself, rigorously, to the unfolding of its consequences. **Fidelity implies that, if there is truth, it can be only cruelly indifferent to the private as such.** **Every truth involves a kind of anti-privatization, a subjective collectivization. In truth, “I” matter only insofar as I am subsumed by the impersonal vector of truth—say, the political organization, or the scientific research program.**[**63**](about:blank) **The truth process builds a new body**. This body of truth is a collective formed to “work for the consequences of the new” and this work, this collective, disciplines and subsumes the faithful.[64](about:blank)Third, collectivity does not imply uniformity. The infinite procedure of verification incorporates multiple experiments, enactments, and effects.Badiou writes, “An organization lies at the intersection between an Idea and an event. However, this intersection only exists as process, whose immediate subject is the political militant.”[65](about:blank) We should amend this statement by replacing *militant* with *comrade*. Comrade highlights the “discipline of the event,” the way that political fidelity cannot be exercised by a solitary individual—hence, the Marxist-Leninist emphasis on the unity of theory and practice, the barren incapacity of each alone. Comrade also affirms the self-abandonment accompanying fidelity to a truth: its vector, its unfolding, is indifferent to my personal experiences and inclinations. For communists, the process of truth has a body and that body is the party, in both its historical and formal sense. Already in *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou recognizes the necessity of a political body, the party as the “subject-support of all politics.”[66](about:blank) He writes:The party is the body of politics, in the strict sense. The fact that there is a body by no means guarantees that there is a subject … But for there to be a subject, for a subject to be found, there must be the support of a body.[67](about:blank) **As a figure of political belonging, the comrade is a faithful response to the evental rupture of crowds and movements, to the egalitarian discharge that erupts from the force of the many where they don’t belong, to the movement of the people as the subject of politics.**[**68**](about:blank) **Comrades demonstrate fidelity through political work; through concerted, disciplined engagement. Their practical political work extends the truth of the emancipatory egalitarian struggle of the oppressed into the world.** Amending Badiou (by drawing from his earlier work), we can say that the comrade is not a faithful subject but a political relation faithful to the divided people as the subject of emancipatory egalitarian politics.[69](about:blank) **For us to see the revolutionary people as the subject in the struggles of the oppressed, for their subject to be found, we must be comrades.** In *Ninotchka*, Nina Ivanova Yakushova can’t tell who her comrades are by looking at them. The party has told her who to look for, but she has to ask. After Iranoff identifies himself, Yakushova tells him her name and the name and position of the party comrade who authorized her visit. Iranoff introduces Buljanoff and Kopalski. Yakushova addresses each as comrade. But it’s not the address that makes them all comrades. They are comrades because they are members of the same party. **The party is the organized body of truth that mediates their relationship. This mediation makes clear what is expected of comrades—disciplined, faithful work.** Iranoff, Buljanoff, and Kopalski have not been doing the work expected of comrades, which is why Moscow sent Yakushova to oversee them in Paris. That Kopalski says they would have greeted her with flowers demonstrates their *embourgeoisment*, the degeneration of their sense of comradeship. But they are all there for work. Gendered identity and hierarchy don’t mediate relations between comrades. The practices of fidelity to a political truth, the work done toward building that truth in the world, do. The solidarity of comrades in political struggle arises out of the intertwining of truth, practice, and party. It’s not reducible to any of these alone. **Comrades are not simply those who believe in the same truth—as in, for example, the idea of communism. Their fidelity to a certain truth is manifested in practical work.** Work for the realization of a political truth brings people into comradely relation. **But carrying out similar tasks in fidelity to the same truth isn’t sufficient for comradeship. The work must be in common; no one is a comrade on their own. Practices of comradeship are coordinated, organized. The party is the organization out of which comradeship emerges and that comrade relations produce. It concentrates comradeship even as comradeship exceeds it.**