# 1AC r 2

#### Revolution is closer than ever – but the masses require a recognition.

Reese 20 - author of Socialism or Extinction and The End of Capitalism: The Thought of Henryk Grossman (Ted, <https://www.amazon.com/Socialism-Extinction-Automation-Capitalist-Breakdown-ebook/dp/B081FHF2ZQ>, emuse)

Those who are lucky enough to find or remain in work as the capitalist crisis deepens will see their pay and conditions savagely forced down. In April 2018, the World Bank recommended yet more deregulation in a report that said “high minimum wages, undue restrictions on hiring and firing and strict contract forms all make workers more expensive vis-à-vis technology”.[437] International capital is preparing a major assault on international labour in order to accelerate moves towards automation. Even if the next crash is not a final breakdown, significant sections of the middle classes would be proletarianised and impoverished and the reserve army of labour would swell. Class struggle would explode. Capitalists could be forced to slow down or stop the introduction of new automation by, say, a strong and militant neo-Luddite or trade union movement and – the usual driver for concessions – the desire for social peace. But the contradiction persists: capital accumulation, and staying ahead of or keeping up with competitors, requires higher productivity and therefore labour-saving innovation. The deeper capitalism sinks into crisis the more necessary it becomes to raise productivity. That is, the more workers are replaced by robots, the greater the underproduction of surplus value becomes, and yet the system will need to respond by replacing more workers with robots. If it cannot do this then capital goes unvalorised and the economy crashes. From the perspective of the bourgeoisie, a strong neo-Luddite or trade union movement would sooner or later have to be crushed. In an article in January 2018 headlined “When the next recession hits, the robots will be ready”, the Washington Post pointed out that innovations happen quickest “when employers slash payrolls going into a downturn and, out of necessity, turn to software or machinery to take over the tasks once performed by their laid-off workers”.[438] Pointing to growing expectations by economists of a financial crisis in 2020, the paper adds that the “next wave of automation won’t just be sleek robotic arms on factory floors. It will be ordering kiosks, self- service apps and software smart enough to perfect schedules and cut down on the workers needed to cover a shift. Employers are already testing these systems. A recession will force them into the mainstream.” Striking statistics from an upcoming paper by economists Nir Jaimovich and Henry Siu “found that 88% of job loss in routine occupations occurs within 12 months of a recession. In the 1990- 1991, 2001 and 2008-2009 recessions, routine jobs accounted for ‘essentially all’ of the jobs lost. They regained almost no ground during the subsequent recoveries.”[439] Automation under capitalism is therefore accelerating the trend towards proletarianisation, higher levels of poverty and the underproduction of surplus value. It is the sharpest of sharpening contradictions, a vicious circle from which capitalism cannot escape. It is a trend which increasingly threatens a final breakdown. The ‘Leninist’ road to socialism[440] – whereby working class organisations (soviets (workers’ councils), communes etc) effectively form an independent state and then, when strong enough, destroy what is left of the capitalist state – of course seems to be dismissed now more than ever – by liberals who claim that the demise of the Soviet Union signalled the end of history;[441] by the anarchists and autonomists who believe a leap into ‘full communism’ can be achieved without the socialist stage; and by ‘democratic socialists’ who claim socialism can be built via bourgeois democracy by voting through ‘socialist policies’. Then there is the notion that Marx and Lenin are redundant because the supposed protagonist of their revolutionary strategy – the industrial proletariat – is dead or irrelevant. There are several problems surrounding this. The accusation about the industrial proletariat is made, in slightly different ways, not just by liberals but by some anarchists, who do not claim that the industrial proletariat is dead but persist with the myth that it is the protagonist of the Leninist revolution. The Bolsheviks focused on agitating among the urban or industrial proletariat because that was the most efficient use of scarce resources, with the intention that the message would then spread outwards to the wider proletariat as a whole. This accusation that Leninists ignore the wider proletariat is often a projection of valid criticisms of some ‘Trotskyists’, who, while posing as Leninists, or at least distorting Leninism, do overemphasise the importance of the industrial worker. This is because Trotskyists – who for the same reason tend to be de facto pro-imperialist (by giving critical support to the Labour Party, for example) – tend to derive from labour aristocratic positions in trade unions and universities. Lenin though is renowned for criticising socialists who limited their agitation to “trade union consciousness” or “economism” – ie, simply supporting, or tailing, working class demands, without advocating an independent (non-social democratic) working class party or proletarian dictatorship (or, before that, the overthrow of tsarism) – and for his ruthless criticism of a labour aristocratic minority which misled the masses with solely reformist demands. Hence why he said revolutionaries had to “dig deeper into the real masses” of the poorest workers, who had the least to lose and the most to gain. This meant that, in Russia, he saw the need for an alliance between workers and poor peasants, an alliance that Leon Trotsky initially rejected. Today, real Leninists still see the poorest and most oppressed workers as the main protagonists of revolution. The claim that the industrial proletariat is dead is either dishonest or smacks of ‘first world’ myopia. The industrial proletariat may have shrunk in the imperialist nations over the past 40 years but internationally it has grown spectacularly. In 2010, 79%, or 541 million, of the world’s industrial workers lived in ‘less developed regions’, up from 34% in 1950 and 53% in 1980, compared to the 145 million industrial workers, or 21% of the total, who in 2010 lived in the imperialist countries.[442] This shift is even greater in the manufacturing industry, since in emerging nations manufacturing forms a much higher proportion of total industrial employment than in imperialist countries, and therefore, as John Bellamy Foster et al point out, “the broad category of ‘industrial employment’ systematically understates the extent to which the world share of manufacturing has grown in developing countries”, citing figures for the US and China showing these ratios to be 58.1% and 75.2% respectively.[443] “Extrapolating these two ratios to ‘more developed’ and ‘less developed’ countries as a whole, 83% of the world’s manufacturing workforce lives and works in the nations of the Global South,” says John Smith in Imperialism in the Twenty First Century.[444] Based on the integration of ‘Southern’ workers into the global economy, the IMF has also attempted to take into account qualitative as well as quantitative changes, calculating an “export-weighted global workforce” by multiplying the numerical growth of the workforce by the increasing degree to which they produce for the global market rather than the domestic market. Since Southern-manufactured exports grew more than twice as fast as GDP during the quarter-century leading up to the global crisis in 2007, the IMF estimates that the effective global workforce quadrupled in size between 1980 and 2003. But even within the imperialist nations, where the industrial working class has declined both absolutely and relatively, Smith points to “deepening proletarianisation”, saying that “the proletarians have increased their already overwhelming predominance within the economically active population [EAP].... Between 1980 and 2005 the proportion of waged and salaried workers in total EAP in ... the developed nations steadily rose, from 83% to 88% (in 2005, around 500 million people), indicating deepening proletarianisation in these countries.”[445] In the US, it is even higher, with waged workers as a proportion of the EAP increasing from 90.6% in 1980 to 93.2% in 2011.[446] Because of distortions made by the ILO’s methods, this undoubtedly underestimates or obscures the size of the labour aristocracy, something we will come back to further on, but the trend is nevertheless clear, with more and more workers being forced into low-paid services work. Obviously with China, India and the former Soviet bloc being integrated into the global economy, 1.47 billion workers joined the global capitalist workforce very suddenly. But this does not distort the overall trend. With their supposed bias for the industrial proletariat, Leninists are accused of failing to recognise the multiple sections of the working class or its fragmentation. But far from ignoring the heterogeneous make-up of the working class, this is one of the factors that contribute to the Leninist conclusion that a vanguard party is necessary – to unite the disparate and sectional struggles of the working class into one unstoppable force. Likewise, the fact recognised across the left that technological advances have fragmented the working class, that they have increased unemployment and underemployment and therefore reduced workers’ leverage in their struggles against their bosses, reflected in the imperialist countries by the low number of strikes since the 1980s, must mean that the state is the primary battleground. We are already seeing this in the re-emergence of social democratic movements (see the previous chapter), whereby downwardly mobile labour aristocracies are becoming slightly more antagonistic towards the ruling class, and are attempting to harness the power of the working class as a whole, in what is essentially a fight with the middle and ruling classes over allocations of surplus value. These strawman accusations against Lenin misrepresent or misinterpret his definition of the proletariat, which followed Marx’s. The main feature of the proletariat as a class is not its direct link with the means of production but rather its separation from them. In other words, the proletariat is first and foremost characterised as a class by the fact that it does not own the means of production and has to work for wages. The salient feature is not what differentiates them, but what unites them. The more a worker is dependant on selling their labour power for survival the deeper their proletarianisation. Indeed, it is the fact that the industrial proletariat is shrinking relative to the working class as a whole, relegating a significant proportion of previously privileged workers into the poorer sections of the working class, that sees the mass of the latter grow numerically in strength. As the mass of exploited manual workers decreases due to scientific and technological progress, particularly automation, the mass of exploited intellectual workers, ie white collar employees, engineers and scientists (who increasingly contribute to commodity production) also increases in reverse proportion. The casualisation of university employment in the past few years is a case in point. In the US, although union membership stood at a lowly 10.7% of the workforce at the start of 2019, the unionisation of traditionally non- unionised white collar labour almost doubled between 2010 and 2017.[447] According to the Pew Research Center, the median wealth (assets minus debts) of the US middle class fell by 28% from 2001 to 2013.[448] People on middle incomes[449] accounted for 50% of the US adult population in 2015, down from 61% in 1971, while the poorest tier of the working class comprised 20% of the population in 2015 compared to 16% in 1975. The number of people receiving supplemental nutritional assistance, or food stamps, exploded from 26 million in 2007 to 46 million in 2012.[450] And 63% of the population say they have less than $500 in personal savings.[451] At the same time private and household debt has gone through the roof. In the 1970s, personal and credit card debts shot up by 238% relative to the 1960s. In the 1980s it shot up on the previous decade by another 318% and by another 180% in the 1990s.[452] According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, household debt rose to a record $13.5 trillion in the fourth quarter of 2018, nearly 7% higher than in the third quarter of 2008. Even more troublingly, a record number of US Americans were three months or more behind on repayments for car loans (more than 7 million). As New York Times journalist Amy Chozick noted in May 2015, “the once ubiquitous term ‘middle class’ has gone conspicuously missing from the 2016 [presidential] campaign trail, as candidates and their strategists grasp for new terms for an unsettled economic era [in which] the middle class has for millions of families become a precarious place to be”.[453] Capitalism in the age of automation increasingly turns the majority of the population into proletarians and, in doing so, creates all economic, social and political prerequisites for the system’s downfall. The deeper the system sinks into crisis, the more proletarians are created, through unemployment, wage cuts and so on, and the more radical they are likely to become. This is borne out by the real development of the international proletariat. While we have already seen that the industrial proletariat has grown enormously, according to the ILO, the world’s “economically active population” (EAP) grew from 1.9 billion in 1980 to 3.1 billion in 2006.[454] Almost all of this numerical growth took place in the ‘emerging nations’, now home to 84% of the global workforce, 1.6 billion of whom worked for wages. The other one billion were small farmers and a multitude of people working in the ‘informal economy’,[455] which is, according to Mike Davis “the fastest growing social class on earth”.[456] While the industrial proletariat in the ‘Global South’ has grown enormously since 1980, its share of the South’s total workforce has been much more modest, rising from 14.5% in 1980, to 16.1% in 1990, to 19.1% in 2000, to 23.1% in 2010[457] – because the absolute growth of the non-industrial proletariat is even greater. Meanwhile, agricultural employment in the Global South has declined to 48% of its EAP, down from 73% in 1960, and from “approximately one-third” to just 4% of EAP in developed countries. However, the ILO reports: “Despite the declining share of agricultural workers in total employment, the absolute numbers of those engaged in agriculture are still rising, most notably in south Asia, east Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa.”[458] The other significant component of the growing proletariat? The unemployed. Smith reports that, apart from China, “no economy has grown fast enough to provide jobs to the legions of young people entering the labour market and the rural exodus to swollen cities in search of work. Even at the zenith of export-oriented industrialisation the ILO reported that ‘in the late 20th century, manufacturing ceased being a major sector of employment growth, except in east and southeast Asia’.” Senior ILO economist Nomaan Majid said the commerce sector, not manufacturing, “is the main employment growth sector in both low- and middle-income groups”.[459] This links back to what we saw in chapter four – that even in the developing nations, the trend towards automation is accompanied by growing unproductive work and unemployment. The numerical growth of the working class has been coupled with a massive attack on its wages, further deepening proletarianisation. In a striking example of how constant capital rises relative to variable capital, John Lanchester writes in the London Review of Books that in the US: “In 1960, the most profitable company in the world’s biggest economy was General Motors (GM). In today’s money, GM made $7.6bn that year. It also employed 600,000 people. Today’s most profitable company employs 92,600. So where 600,000 workers would once generate $7.6bn in profit, now 92,600 generate $89.9bn, an improvement in profitability per worker of 76.65 times. Remember, this is pure profit for the company’s owners, after all workers have been paid. Capital isn’t just winning against labour: there’s no contest. If it were a boxing match, the referee would stop the fight.”[460] Whereas wages in the US rose by 350% between 1927 and 1977, real terms growth has since been in decline. In Britain, wages grew at an annual average of 2.9% in the 1960s and 70s, 1.5% in the 90s and 1.2% in the 2000s. Between 2007 and 2015 that trend accelerated at an unprecedented rate, with real household wages falling by 10.4%.[461] The Resolution Foundation said the 2010s would be the worst decade for UK wage growth since the late 18th century. But as bad as the attack on wages in imperialist countries has been, it has been even worse in the countries imperialism plunders, where workers are of course already paid much less. According to the ILO’s World of Work Report 2011, since the early 1990s the “share of domestic income that goes to labour ... declined in nearly three-quarters of the 69 countries with available information”. While “the wage share among advanced economies has been trending downward since 1975”, it “occurred at a much more moderate pace than among emerging and developing economies – falling roughly nine percentage points since 1980”.[462] In contrast, the fall in Asia between 1994 and 2010 was around 20%. The imperialist countries have also seen a decline in full-time self- employment and self-employed income. This has included a continuing shrinkage in the number of small family farmers, indicating the proletarianisation of portions of the lower middle classes. Michael Elsby’s study The Decline of US Labor Share reports that the “rise in inequality is even more striking for proprietors’ income than it is for payroll income. In 1948 the bottom 90% of employees earned 75% of payroll compensation. By 2010 this had declined to 54%. For entrepreneurial income, however, this fraction plummeted from 42% in 1948 to 14% in 2010.”[463] A separate study of 2014 data by the US Small Business Administration suggests the same pattern regarding millennials (generally defined as people born between 1985 and 2004). “Fewer than 4% of 30 year-olds reported they were in full-time self-employment – a proxy for entrepreneurship – compared with 5.4% of Generation X-ers [1965 and 1984] and 6.7% of Baby Boomers [1945 and 1964] at the same age,” the FT reported.[464] Furthermore, the pace of decline in wages has accelerated in recent years, “with the wage share falling more than 11 percentage points between 2002 and 2006. In China, the wage share declined by close to 10 percentage points since 2000.”[465] Africa’s workers saw their share of national income reduced by 15% in the two decades since 1990, again “with most of this decline – 10 percentage points – taking place since 2000. The decline is even more spectacular in north Africa, where the wage share fell by more than 30 percentage points after 2000.”[466] Latin America saw the lowest decline, of 10% since 1993, and most of it before 2000, undoubtedly due to strong workers’ organisation and resistance, represented by the left-wing ‘Pink Tide’ in Venezuela,[467] Bolivia, Brazil and Argentina. As mentioned, mainstream economic accounting methods underepresent the size of the middle classes and labour aristocracy – which are bound to be proportionately bigger in imperialist nations – and do not take account of sharply increasing inequality between skilled/professional and unskilled workers or of income to capital that has been classified as income to labour, such as bonuses paid to bankers and wages and sponsorship of sports professionals etc, meaning the real extent of the fall in labour’s share is even higher, and considerably so. Elsby attempts to challenge these distortions, writing that in the US, the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ (BLS) calculation of a decline of 3.9% in the share of national income for labour over 1987-2013 becomes a 10% decline when the highest paid 1% of employees are excluded, and a 14% decline when the highest paid 10% are excluded. Based on this more honest method, the lowest 90% of wage earners (84% of the US’s total economically active population) actually earned 42% of the total payroll in 1980 and just 28% in 2011. Elsby also found that the fall for labour has accelerated as time has progressed, declining by twice as much between 2000 and 2011 as in the previous two decades.[468] Again, the trend towards deepening proletarianisation is clear. The material basis for a position of relative privilege among the lower middle classes and labour aristocracy is disappearing. The proletariat is numerically stronger than ever, especially as an international class. ‘Neoliberal globalisation’, which promised to produce prosperous nations of entrepreneurs and homeowners, has instead produced capitalism’s grave-diggers. All this is confirmed by the fact that inequality has hit record levels. In 2018 and 2019, Oxfam found that the 26 richest billionaires owned as much in assets as the 3.8 billion people who make up the poorest half of the planet’s population. The number had been 61 in 2016 and 43 in 2017, showing again that capital continues to centralise. Marx wrote that the concentration of wealth at one pole depended on the concentration of poverty at the other. And lo: the wealth of more than 2,200 billionaires across the globe increased by $900bn in 2018, a 12% increase against a fall of 11% in the wealth of the poorest half of the world’s population. Between 1980 and 2015, the global economy grew by 380%, yet the number of people living in poverty on less than $5 (£3.20) a day increased by more than 1.1 billion. In 1980, $2.20 of every $100 went to the world’s poorest 20%, but in 2003 that figure had fallen to 60 cents.[469] Inequality is most acute between rich and poor countries but it is growing within rich countries as well. In the US, for example, according to the Federal Reserve, the richest 1% owned a record-high 38.6% of the country’s wealth in 2016, nearly twice as much as the bottom 90%. Anti-socialists will still ignore all this or proclaim that the proletariat is no longer a revolutionary class because living standards are generally much higher than 100 years ago, claiming that really “we are all middle class now” or making shallow observations such as “capitalism works because workers have mobile phones!” as if cracking some kind of insightful gotcha that disproves Marxism. This ignores how as the rate of exploitation increases, the value of necessary labour falls, making the commodities workers need to buy to live cheaper. It ignores how the needs of the working class change as capitalism develops: workers need smartphones and laptops in this day and age of 24-hour connectivity if they are even to be considered employable, and so the cost of a smartphone is included in the value of labour power. It also ignores that workers in some countries may have access to better infrastructure than in others (indeed, although no technology has ever scaled as quickly as the mobile phone, while five billion people now have mobile phones, only around 2.5 billion of world’s population presently have a smartphone). But most of all, it is ignorant of the fact that capitalism is breaking down, which will impoverish and radicalise the working class. The revolutionary power of the working class is latent.

#### Global capitalism has shifted production from the terrain of the centralized power to the a form of domination to which there is no outside – welcome to Empire, a new imperial regime of biopolitics and war.

Connell ‘12

[Raewyn, sociology at the University of Sydney. 2012. “The Poet of Autonomy: Antonio Negri as a Social Theorist,” <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.985.4088&rep=rep1&type=pdf>] pat

Negri describes a power structure that operates on a world scale, but has no directing centre. The accumulation of power is greater than it has ever been, yet sovereignty has been dispersed. Modern capitalism has produced a strange political order, quite different from the “imperialism” of the nineteenth century – hence Negri uses the old-fashioned term “empire.” There are levels in this power structure, and “apexes and summits of imperial power” [Hardt and Negri 2000, 355], particularly the US state and its nuclear armaments. Yet this eminence, even its universal nuclear death threat, does not give the US government the capacity to administer the world, and this is proved by the failure of the neo-conservative strategy under George W. Bush. Sovereign power is widely dispersed in network fashion, according to Empire, though Commonwealth give a somewhat lumpier picture of a global “aristocracy” on top of various pyramids of power, whether states or corporations. Consistently, though, it is argued that the strongest centres can, at best, conduct police operations and need help from other parts of the network.

At the same time Empire has become, in a certain sense, total. There is no “outside” to the system, for instance no transcendent ethical standpoint from which its operations can be effectively criticised. There are echoes of Foucault here, but Negri’s model is not one of universal capillary power, or postmodern fragmentation. The dispersed sovereignty of Empire is still a system of domination, quite specifically of capitalist domination. “In Empire capital and sovereignty tend to overlap completely” [Hardt and Negri 2004, 334]. It is a system designed to maintain exploitation and the accumulation of wealth globally in the hands of the privileged few.

Such a system has to be violent, hard-headed and ruthless. Empire was published before the 9/11 atrocity, but the model has no difficulty accounting for the US response to the attack, and for the subsequent atrocities against Afghanistan and Iraq. Multitude argues that war, the extreme expression of the violence of the system, has become endemic and indeed necessary to the global order. “Military force must guarantee the conditions for the functioning of the world market” [ibidem, 21, 90, 177].

Empire is a system of domination produced by rupture from earlier systems of domination – from traditional imperialism and from the disciplinary society of modernity. Negri sometimes speaks of the emergence of a “society of control.” The new society is marked by hybrid forms of rule, cobbled together to deal ad hoc with urgent problems (e.g. private police, “public-private partnerships,” puppet governments). There is no overall system, orderliness, in the global exercise of power. But there is an overall character to it:

In Empire corruption is everywhere... It resides in different forms in the supreme government of Empire and its vassal administrations, the most refined and the most rotten administrative police forces, the lobbies of the ruling classes, the mafias of rising social groups...the great financial conglomerates, and everyday economic transactions. Through corruption, imperial power extends a smoke screen across the world, and command over the multitude is exercised in this putrid cloud, in the absence of light and truth [Hardt and Negri 2000, 389].

Corruption expresses the arbitrariness of a power which has no rationale, no justification, except the maintenance of domination itself.

Empire is a new form of the state; but it is a state that has achieved an eerie autonomy from society. Negri suggests that the mediations are dying, that civil society – far from flourishing in globalization, as optimists like Beck [1999] and Giddens [2002] think – is withering away. The established institutions of modern society (school, family, hospital, factory etc.) “are everywhere in crisis” [Hardt and Negri 2000, 329], endemically corrupted. In their place arises a society of control centering on a strong state. Negri has no patience with social-democratic wailing about the decline of the state under globalization. In his view, big government has never gone away. It has, however, changed its focus – from economic planning to social control, the mobilization of force, “security.” The inherent violence of capitalist power is more and more clearly revealed.

As a good Marxist, Negri sees an economic rationale (he never speaks of an “economic base,” for reasons that will become clear) in this political order. Empire is capitalist power being exerted over a new system of production. Adapting language from Foucault, Negri speaks of “biopolitical production.” This means that capitalist exploitation has stretched its scope, from the simple making of commodities in the traditional factory, to the making of the whole pattern of life. Adapting language from Marx, he speaks of the “real subsumption” of society under capital, which involves a historically new pattern of exploitation:

But today, in the paradigm of immaterial production, the theory of value cannot be conceived in terms of measured quantities of time, and so exploitation cannot be understood in these terms. Just as we must understand the production of value in terms of the common, so too must we try to conceive exploitation as the expropriation of the common [Hardt and Negri 2004, 150].

“Immaterial production” refers to new forms of labour, centering on the exchange of information and on human emotion, that have displaced the old. Here Negri draws on recent discussions of computerization, the “information society,” the service economy and emotion work, to draw a picture of the emergence of a new type of worker who is the key to contemporary social change. “Immaterial labor has become hegemonic in qualitative terms and has imposed a tendency on other forms of labor and society itself” [ibidem, 109].

#### In the age of Empire, just governance has eroded. Labor movements under capital have their demands of capital and state reduced to mechanisms of maintaining equilibrium.

Connell 2

[Raewyn, sociology at the University of Sydney. 2012. “The Poet of Autonomy: Antonio Negri as a Social Theorist,” <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.985.4088&rep=rep1&type=pdf>] sosa

Negri’s first distinctive contribution was to apply Tronti’s principle to the Keynesian state. In a brilliant essay of 1967, Negri showed how the growth of working class power in Europe drove the development of Keynes’s economic thought and even shaped the fundamental ideas of the General Theory. For instance the balance of class power, especially the working-class capacity to impose a downward rigidity of wages, underpinned Keynes’s vital category of “effective demand.” Similarly the imperatives of class politics underlay Keynes’s apparently technical exercise in reinstating equilibrium, subordinating interest rates to the marginal efficiency of capital in order to produce full employment. Keynes produced the strategy by which the state could internalize working-class pressure and turn it to the ends of capitalist development. In the following years Negri traced the development of this “planning-state” (roughly, the welfare state plus macroeconomic planning plus incomes policy) as a capitalist response to working-class pressure. He then, in a key text of 1971 later published as Crisi dello Stato-piano, diagnosed the disruption of the planning-state and the emergence of a “crisis-state” or “enterprise-state.”

Why does the capitalist state mutate into these forms? Basically, Negri argues, because working-class struggle damages the underlying economic mechanisms of the capitalist system. Negri puts this in Marxist language by saying that working-class struggle destroys the “law of value” that governs exchange in the labour market (in Marxist terms, the purchase of labour-power) and thus the distribution of income. More broadly (Negri goes into considerable detail here about economic cycles, inflation and public finance) working-class pressure tends to disrupt or constrain all the mechanisms of the circulation of capital, and thus prevents the capitalist economy working as an automatic, self-regulating system. Capitalism is, in another characteristic phrase of Negri’s, de-structured or de-composed by struggle.

Capital responds by an extension of state power, which through planning apparently restores market relations. Again Negri goes into considerable detail about how this happened, analyzing the US New Deal as well as the European postwar planning-state. This view is not unlike other Marxist theories of the state, though Negri’s economic argument is more specific than most. Where Negri differs from conventional theories is his insistence that the solution via the state is extremely unstable. The factory subordinated itself to the state, which guaranteed the fundamental conditions of the system’s functioning – and of the factory system in the first place. Via the state, exchange-value found a guarantee for operating as the general law of reproduction of the conditions of production. But this mechanism has not functioned. It has been destroyed, starting with the factory and ending by embracing the whole society... [Negri 1974, 32].

With the law of value in tatters, there is no rational basis for any distribution of income that the state decrees (this important conclusion was reached about the same time, along a different path, by Claus Offe in Germany.) The exercise of state power becomes fundamentally arbitrary. In Negri’s language, the planning-state increasingly becomes a system of contentless command. Its function now is essentially a police function. It seeks ways of dividing the working class and disrupting the struggles that are de-structuring the system. The state loses legitimacy and lurches into crisis.

When working-class pressure makes the economy under the planning-state unworkable – Negri is now talking about the stagnation and fiscal crisis emerging in the early 1970s – capital is forced to try another tack. The pressure can only be relieved “within a project that is qualitatively different from that of reformist planning” [Red Notes 1979, 34]. This new political project involves the separation of production from circulation, the creation of a “productive subject” who does not act collectively, a new capitalist strategy for the labour market, and globalization. Here Negri is, in short, analyzing the strategy of neo-liberalism in response to the crisis of the Keynesian welfare state. It is worth noting that these texts were written in 1973, long before Thatcher, Reagan, or Berlusconi came to power or the World Bank and IMF turned to structural adjustment programmes.

In later analyses of the neo-liberal strategy, Negri [1988, 183; a text written in 1980] emphasised that entrepreneurialism and the celebration of freedom go together with authoritarianism and increases in the coercive power of the state. He also observed how the neo-liberal strategy works by the exclusion, rather than the representation, of social forces. Unions and mass parties are sidelined, industrial bargaining declines. The inclusive strategy of the Keynesian era is reversed, so state and capital tend to function in a social vacuum [Hardt and Negri 1994, ch. 6]. Here too, Negri very early detected patterns that have since become globally familiar.

At the same time, to counter the collapsing rate of profit, capital is forced to extend its economic operations beyond the factory to the whole terrain of social production. To counter working-class struggle on that wider terrain, capital is forced to extend the technique of factory command to the whole of society. Civil society dies, and with it all possibility of Gramscian hegemony.

In a startling reversal, Negri [1977, 245] argued in La forma stato, “to the state, accumulation; to the enterprise, legitimation, the carrying of consensus.” Productivity becomes the only basis of legitimacy. (This was a trend that proved formative for neo-liberal “enterprise culture” in the 1980s and after.) Meanwhile the state, as a system of contentless command, relies more and more heavily on the use of force. The cycles of the capitalist economy “can now only function if reinforced by a surplus of power” [ibidem, 228]. In enforcing capitalist command, “administrative rationality does not become terror, it is terror. Remove from capitalist society its only rationality, which is grounded in the lust for exploitation: you have this baroque monster of provocation and devastation” [ibidem, 259]

#### This has produced a system of exhaustion: accumulating crises build as humanity sits in apathy.

Bifo ‘19

[Franco Berardi, Italian communist philosopher, theorist and activist in the autonomist tradition. May 2019. “Game Over,” <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/100/268601/game-over/>] pat

Social integration is collapsing, but at the same time, the process of civilization has culminated in the self-construction of the automaton, which impassively takes shape in the connective space of digital computation.

Environmental collapse, global civil war, nuclear proliferation, and epidemics of panic and depression are steps towards extinction. But this is not the end of the world, since abstraction has created a world of its own, subsuming social language and prescribing the social forms of interaction.

Twentieth century medicine aimed to heal the sick. Twenty-first century medicine is increasingly aiming to upgrade the healthy … In the twentieth century, medicine benefited the masses because the twentieth century was the age of the masses. Twentieth century armies needed millions of healthy soldiers, and economies needed millions of healthy workers.

—Yuval Harari, Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow

Expansion and acceleration have been fostered by the cultural erasure of transitoriness. Investing time in economic value has been a way to simulate eternity: private property, accumulation, and the sacrifice of the present on the altar of the future. This cycle of sacrifice, investment, and expansion has been the strength of capitalism.

Now it’s over. The physical resources of the planet and the nervous energies of society are on the path to final exhaustion. The collapse of visions of the future has paved the way for reflecting on a previously forbidden subject: extinction.

Trans-humanist utopians, for their part, indulge in fantasies about imminent promises of high-tech immortality.

Both hypocritical tech-cheerfulness and contemporary nihilism are based on a shared vision of the ineluctable: it’s too late to stop devastation and climate change, and it’s too late to stop the psychotic collapse of the hyper-connected mind.

This helps to explain the nonsensical increase of inequalities that marks the wealth distribution of our time: the predators think that it is impossible to stop the extinction process. In their calculation, all they can do is protect themselves and their families, and this alone may prove enormously expensive. Panic and cynicism prevail in the terminal psychosphere.

#### This is unsustainable and causes extinction – multiple intertwined crises make collapse inevitable which means its try-or-die – we got charts.

von Weizsäcker and Wijkman ‘17

Ernest Ulrich von Weizsäcker, Professor and Director of the United Nation Centre for Science and Technology for Development, Founder and President of the Wuppertal Institute, Member of the German Bundestag, chairing the Committees on Globalization and the Environment, Dean of the graduate School of Environmental Science and Management at the University of California, appointed Co-Chair of UNEP’s International Resource Panel, Anders Wijkman, chairman of the Swedish Association of Recycling Industries, member of the Board of the Swedish Development Authority (SIDA), appointed chair of the Swedish Cross-Party Committee on Environmental Objectives, member of the European Parliament, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Policy Director of UNDP, Secretary General of the Swedish Red Cross and Director General of the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries, Member of the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences, the World Future Council and the International Resource Panel, 2017 (“Come On! Capitalism, Short-termism, Population and the Destruction of the Planet – A Report to the Club”, November 11th, Available Online via Subscription to Springer, Accessed 03-20-2018)

1.1 Introduction: The World in Disarray We all know that the world is in crisis. Science tells us that almost half of the top soils on earth have been depleted in the last 150 years1 ; nearly 90% of fish stocks are either overfished or fully fished.2 Climate stability is in real danger (Sects. 1.5 and 3.7); and the earth is now in the sixth mass extinction period in history.3 Perhaps the most accurate account of the ecological situation is the 2012 ‘Imperative to act’,4 launched by all the 18 recipients (till 2012) of the Blue Planet Prize, including Gro Harlem Brundtland, James Hansen, Amory Lovins, James Lovelock and Susan Solomon. Its key message reads, ‘The human ability to do has vastly outstripped the ability to understand. As a result, civilization is faced with a perfect storm of problems, driven by overpopulation, overconsumption by the rich, the use of environmentally malign technologies and gross inequalities’. And further, ‘The rapidly deteriorating biophysical situation is barely recognized by a global society infected by the irrational belief that physical economies can grow forever’. 1.1.1 Different Types of Crisis and a Feeling of Helplessness The crisis is not cyclical but growing. And it is not limited to the nature around us. There are also a social crisis, a political and a cultural crisis, a moral crisis, as well as a crisis of democracy, of ideologies and of the capitalist system. The crisis also consists of deepened poverty in many countries and the loss of jobs for a considerable part of the population worldwide. Billions of people have reached a state of mind where they don’t trust their government anymore.5 Seen from a geographic point of view, symptoms of crisis are found nearly everywhere. The ‘Arab Spring’ was followed by a series of wars and civil wars, serious human rights violations and many millions of refugees. The internal situation is not better in Eritrea, South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen or Honduras. Venezuela and Argentina, once among the richer states of the world, face huge economic challenges, and neighbouring Brazil has gone through many years of recession and political turmoil. Russia and several East European countries are struggling with major economic and political problems in their post-communist phase. Japan finds it difficult to overcome decadelong stagnation, and to deal with the 2011 tsunami and ensuing nuclear disaster. And the temporary economic upswing several African countries have enjoyed lost its dynamism as soon as the prices of mineral resources collapsed, and partly due to very unusual droughts. Land grabbing is plaguing much of Africa, but also other parts of the world, leading to involuntary dislocations of millions of people and the related problems with refugees both within countries and abroad.6 The response of governments has been concentrated, at worst, on managing their own political image, and at best to treat the symptoms of the crisis, not the cause. The problem is that the political class in the whole world is strongly influenced by investors and by powerful private companies. This indicates that the current crisis is also a crisis of global capitalism. Since the 1980s, capitalism has moved from furthering the economic development of countries, regions and the world towards maximizing profits, and then to a large extent profits from speculation. In addition, the capitalism unleashed since 1980 in the Anglo-Saxon world, and since 1990 worldwide, is mainly financial. This trend was supported by excessive deregulation and liberalization of the economy (see Sect. 2.4). The term ‘shareholder value’ popped up in the business pages of the media worldwide, as if that was now the new epiphany and guardrail for all economic action. In reality, it served to narrow business down to short-term gains, often at the expense of social and ecological values. The myth of shareholder value has been effectively debunked in a recent book by Lynn Stout.7 A different, if related, feature of ‘disarray’ is the rise of aggressive, mostly rightwing movements against globalization in OECD countries, often referred to as populism. These have become overt through Brexit and the Trump victory in the United States. As Fareed Zakaria observes, ‘Trump is part of a broad populist

Chart, line chart

Description automatically generated

upsurge running through the Western world. … In most (countries), populism remains an opposition movement, although one that is growing in strength; in others, such as Hungary, it is now the reigning ideology’.8 This phenomenon of right-wing populism can be explained to an extent by the ‘trunk valley of the elephant curve’ (Fig. 1.1) 9 showing the decline of developed world middle classes, during a 20-year period. While more than half of the world’s population was enjoying over 60% income rises, OECD’s middle classes suffered losses caused mainly by the deindustrialization and job losses in major parts of the United States, Britain and other countries. In the United States, the median income increased by a meagre 1.2% since 1979. The stunning income growth on the left-hand side of the curve, the ‘back of the elephant’, lifting some two billion people out of poverty, was caused mainly by China’s and some other countries’ economic success. What remains invisible on the picture is the far end of ‘the trunk of the elephant’: The richest 1% of the world and, more revolting, the richest eight persons of the world now own as much wealth as the poorest half of the world population combined, a figure publicized by Oxfam during the 2017 World Economic Forum.10 The ‘elephant curve’ gives an incomplete picture for a second reason. The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) has proposed a Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) going beyond just income and including ten indicators around health, education and living standards. Using that MPI, OPHI counts 1.6 billion people living in ‘multidimensional poverty’ in 2016 – nearly twice as many as the number of people living in extreme poverty measured by income alone.11 Thirdly, the interpretation of the curve requires an analysis of the people in each percentile group. In fact, they tend to move. And the curve does not distinguish those in Russia and East European countries who lost much of their income after 1990 from those in Detroit or middle England who, for very different reasons, also were among the losers.12 Another fact cannot be seen in the picture: the massive shift of money and income from the manufacturing and trade sectors to the financial sector.13 Bruce Bartlett, a senior policy advisor to both the Reagan and Bush administrations, argues that this ‘financialization’ of the economy is the cause of income inequality, falling wages and the poor performance. David Stockman, Reagan’s director of the Office of Management and Budget, agrees, describing our current situation as ‘corrosive financialization that has turned the economy into a giant casino since the 1970s’.14 Populist politicians in the OECD countries see themselves as speaking for the forgotten ‘ordinary’ people and for genuine patriotism, but they tend to fight and antagonize the people representing democratic institutions – what an irony! For the European Union (EU), the strongest trigger for populism has been the millions of refugees who came or would like to come to Europe from the Near East, from Afghanistan and from Africa. Even the most generous European countries have reached their own assumed limits for receiving these masses of refugees. The EU institutions were too weak (not too powerful, as they are depicted by the new nationalists) to deal with the ‘refugee crisis’, resulting eventually in an identity crisis in the EU. Once a success story of an entity ensuring peace and economic development, the EU has lost some of its unifying narrative. The populist right-wing movements or parties see and criticize the EU as the culprit for all kinds of undesired events. The irony is that continuing the success story would require more, not less, powers for the Union. The Union should be entrusted with border protection, a well-funded common asylum and refugee policy to deal with the refugee crisis and maintain the advantages of the Schengen agreement. And for the re-stabilization of the Euro, the EU or at least the Euro zone needs a common fiscal policy, as the new French President Emmanuel Macron is proposing. But it is these very measures of which nationalist populists are most afraid. The EU in its present form is not without shortcomings. Free market principles have come to dominate EU policymaking, leading to a subordination of other policies, like environment. Notably the UK wanted that priority, as it preferred to see the EU chiefly as a union for mutual trade. And the austerity policies pursued have blocked many benign investments and led to unnecessary suffering among tens of millions of Europeans. Such shortcomings, however, should never be used to put in question the overall objectives of the EU – a union of peace, the rule of law, human rights, cultural understanding and sustainability. Addressing the global crisis of democracy, the German Bertelsmann Foundation has published a 3000-page empirical report on progress (or lack thereof) on democracy and a social market economy, as measured by the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI).15 Over the last few years, the report sees a consistent decay of such parameters as civil rights, free and fair elections, freedom of opinion and of press, freedom of assembly and separation of powers. Within the same time frame, the number of countries in which authoritarian, mostly religious, dogmas influence political decision making rose from 22% to 33%. That report was published before the assaults on democracy and civil rights that occurred in summer 2016 in Turkey or the Philippines. Symptoms of tyranny are spreading, including in some of the countries with a solid tradition of freedom and democracy.16 Let us briefly turn to a different kind of crisis. Well, not exactly a crisis but an unpleasant feature in an otherwise fruitful communication tool, the ‘social media’. Aside from being practical and useful for everyday arrangements and exchange of news and reasonable opinions, social media also have become vehicles for enhancing conflicts and vilification of mostly innocent individuals, and for spreading ‘post truth’ nonsense. Much of the contents of social media political conversation is selfenhancing political rubbish, as those media serve as ‘echo chambers’ for networks of like-minded frustrated citizens.17 An empirical study from China found that anger and indignation are the emotions that are most likely to get viral in the social media, meaning they are multiplied faster and stronger than other emotions.18 The Internet and the social media are also vehicles for ‘bots’ (short for robots) that can disrupt or destroy messages, multiply nonsense and create all kinds of mischief. There are dozens of types of malicious bots (and botnets) to harvest email addresses, to grab content of websites and reuse it without permission, to spread viruses and worms, to buy up good seats for entertainment events, to increase views for YouTube videos or to increase traffic counts in order to extract money from advertisers. A more frightening cause of disarray relates to terrorism. In earlier times, humanity’s violent conflicts occurred mostly between different countries. In recent times, systemic and at least partly religious conflicts prevail, using terror attacks with the explicit intention of making people feel insecure. During much of the twentieth century, religions remained quiet, non-aggressive and geographically confined to rather stable territories. This no longer is true. Partly because of globalized populations moving or being forced to leave their home territories, some factions of Islam have expanded geographically and are claiming strong influence over national states, for example, attacking countries like France with its tradition of laicism that does not permit religion to dominate politics. What tends to be underrepresented in the media is the positive role of religions. In Christian-dominated Europe, liberal and tolerant religion became part of the European identity a century after the Enlightenment successfully discredited the earlier doctrinaire, authoritarian and colonialist-missionary manifestations of the faith. During the Cold War, Christian goals of social cohesion helped build the system of ‘Western values’, often described as the social welfare state, or the ‘social market economy’ (for its partial demise, see Sect. 2.4). With a view towards leading Islam into an equally benign and co-operative social role, some Islamic scholars, such as Syrian born Bassam Tibi, call on Muslims in Europe to integrate into democratic society.19 Tibi, however, is not popular among radical Muslims, to put it mildly. But to understand the radicalization of Islam, one must not underestimate the role played by the West, in particular the United States, in interfering with Near Eastern states. Some would say that the troublesome situations mentioned so far, the recurring topics of media headlines, are only the surface of our world’s ‘disarray’. Deeper and more systemic problems include the breath-taking speed of technological development that may very easily run out of control. One trend is digitization that potentially threatens millions of jobs (see Sect. 1.11.4). Another trend or development can be observed in the biological sciences and technologies. The enormous acceleration of genetic engineering through the CRISPR-Cas9 technology20 is causing fears of monster creation or the extinction of species or varieties not seen as valuable under human utilitarian criteria. Generally, a non-specific feeling is spreading that ‘progress’ has scary sides and that the genie may already have left the bottle (see Sect. 1.11.3). No doubt there is a need to analyse and understand the symptoms and roots of the variety of crises, political, economic, social, technological and environmental. It is also important to recognize the extent to which people perceive the various phenomena of disarray and feel disoriented, and to recognize that the reality and the feelings of disarray have a moral and even religious dimension. 1.1.2 Financialization: A Phenomenon of Disarray An important part of the disorientation relates to financial markets. Historians will look back at the last 30 years with concern, when looking at the explosion in bank balance sheets, backed up by declining levels of equity and massive borrowing. One of the results was a temporary private-sector-led boom. The other was a massive increase in the world’s financial sector (finance, insurance, real estate – FIRE), often called financialization, and subsequently the financial crisis of 2008–2009. Excessive risk-taking developed into a crisis that was close to bringing the whole financial system to a halt. When the bubble burst, many governments were forced to step in with broad support programmes. Governments caught by the new mind-set (see Sect. 2.4) were intimately involved in all of this. True, there are many examples of serious malpractices within the private financial sector. But had it not been for the systematic deregulation of the banks by governments, with the purpose of stimulating economic growth by issuing more debt, the situation would have been radically different. The causes behind the crisis were many and varied: – Excessive lending by the banking industry – Lack of action on the part of regulators and central banks to stop (i) excessive lending, (ii) the spread of exotic financial instruments (synthetic assets and bonds, collateralized mortgage obligations/CMOs, structured debt issues, etc.) and (iii) pure speculative transactions – Opaque tax havens, and the absence of a binding legal framework that is accepted and implemented by the international community, in general, and the major jurisdictions and financial centres – Securitization and distribution by investment banks and other financial actors of mortgage-related assets and investment vehicles transferring the credit risk from the original lender to the ultimate bondholders – Failure by some rating agencies and auditing firms to properly assess and report the inherent risks posed by many of the financial products A deeper analysis is presented by economists Anat Admati and Martin Hellwig21 about the main causes behind the financial crisis. Western banks borrowed far too much with far too little equity in their balance sheets to act as a buffer if things went wrong in their business – from trading in the multitrillion-dollar derivatives markets to often reckless lending on real estate. In the decades following the Second World War, banks operated with between 20% and 30% of their liabilities as equity. By 2008, that had shrunk to just 3%. Banks obviously believed that they had invented instruments that removed the risk, allowing them to run their banks with a tenth of the buffer they had before. It proved to be very unrealistic. But they counted with the state to underwrite their risks. Bankers have enriched themselves spectacularly in the process. They made themselves ‘too big to fail’ – and too big to jail. The 2008 financial crisis was mostly caused by that irresponsible greed.22 Yet, in 2009, not only did bankers avoid criminal prosecutions and receive hundreds of billions in government bailouts, but some still paid themselves record bonuses. At the same time, almost nine million households in the United States had to abandon their homes when the value of their houses plummeted and they could no longer service the adjustable-rate mortgages – the so-called foreclosure crisis.23 Financialization refers to the dominance of the financial sector in the global economy and the tendency for accumulated profits (and leverage) to flow into real estate and other speculative investment. Debt is an intrinsic element in this process. In the United States, for example, both household debt and private sector debt more than doubled relative to GDP between 1980 and 2007.24 The same is true for most OECD countries. At the same time, ‘the value of financial assets grew from four times GDP in 1980 to ten times GDP in 2007 and the finance sector’s share of corporate profits grew from about 10% in the early 1980s to almost 40% by 2006’.25 Adair Turner, chair of the UK’s Financial Services Authority in the years following the 2007–2008 crisis, regards unchecked private credit creation as the key system fault that led to that crisis with its devastating consequences.26 From this follows that the financial sector constitutes a significant and increasing risk factor in the economy. The degree of financialization varies from country to country but the increase in the power of finance is general. The current finance sector evolved in the context of the deregulation that gathered pace from the late 1970s and expanded dramatically after the 1999 removal of the separation between commercial and investment banking in the United States.27 This barrier had been put in place in 1933 by the Roosevelt administration in response to the Wall Street Crash of 1929, when a period of rampant credit creation and financial speculation collapsed. Similar speculation preceded the crisis of 2007–2008: The face value of financial products reached US$640 trillion in September 2008, 14 times the GDP of all the countries on earth.28 Lietaer et al.29 compare speculation with ordinary money transfers paying for goods and services: ‘In 2010, the volume of foreign exchange transactions reached $4 trillion per day’, which does not even include derivatives. In comparison, ‘one day’s exports or imports of all goods and services in the world amount to about 2% of those $4 trillion’. Transactions not paying for goods and services, almost by definition are speculative. Such financial products and transactions, the authors continue, lead regularly to monetary crashes, sovereign debt crises and systemic crashes with an average of more than ten countries in crisis every year. One of the consequences of this development is that a significant part of economic growth has been distributed to the wealthy, as mentioned with the new Oxfam figures in the previous subchapter. Practices within the financial sector demonstrate a disregard for the impact they have on both people and the planet. That includes a distinct short-termism, the ratio of banks’ reserves to their loans, the ratio of banks’ lending that support the real economy versus speculation in property and derivatives, unchecked credit creation – in fact money creation – and the failure to account for long-term climate and environmental risks. In the words of Otto Scharmer at MIT,30 ‘We have a system that accumulates oversupply of money in areas that produce high financial and low environmental and social returns, while at the same an undersupply of money in areas that serve important societal investment needs’. The failure to account for environmental risks means that the pressure on already scarce natural resources accelerates – trees are felled, waterways polluted, wetlands drained and the exploitation of oil, gas and coal accelerating, as long as there is demand. It also means that huge savings, among them pension funds, are locked into investments in fossil-based assets. Such assets are increasingly looked upon as high-risk assets (see Sect. 3.4).

#### Only the refusal of the extraction of capitalist value coupled with the swift and destructive power of the proletariat has the potential to tackle Empire.

Hardt and Negri ‘17 (Michael, professor of literature @ Duke, and Antonio, professor of political philosophy @ University of Padua, “Assembly,” p. 235-239) //BS // sosa 4-4-2018 \*\*[brackets for] ~~abeist language~~

A “social strike” is always a general strike, which, like general strikes of the past, attacks immediately the structures of power. It is general in the sense that it generalizes or spreads the refusal of capitalist power across society and transforms economic, cultural, and political resistances into a demand for power. In a social strike, then, destituent and constituent moments cannot really be separated. A strike is born against exploitation and domination but contains in itself the urgency to create new social relations. Sometimes, of course, a social strike is primarily destituent, focused on attacking the structures of power, but even then constituent elements are implicit. Other times social strikes have utopian visions and seem not to take into account the destituent task, but in these cases, too, passion and suffering emerge to illuminate the need for antagonism. The young Hegel, for example, described well such a struggle of life and death in the context of the French Revolution.8 One might say, following Hegel, that in the social strike the “tragedy of the spirit” is made concrete, incarnated in this dialectic. Or as the old anarchists used to say, “death to capital, freedom to the peoples!” We should emphasize, for those who have any doubts, that our notions of social strike and general strike have little in common with the grève générale theorized by Georges Sorel.9 For Sorel, proletarian violence is essentially and structurally different than capitalist and state violence. The working class must not repeat the bourgeois path to taking power, he maintains, which eventually shifts from creative instances of constituent power to repressive acts of constituted power. The concept of power itself is thus broken in two since the proletariat’s taking possession of power is radically different from the bourgeois state form of power. All of that might be useful if not for the fact that in Sorel proletarian violence and communist insurrection lose their material contents and are defined by individualism and anti-intellectualism. Sorel’s grève générale is not really about class struggle. In fact, the main problem with Sorel (and the anarchists who follow him) is that he believes that from violence and destruction will spontaneously arise a new society. It may be true that proletarians have wings, but they are wings weighed down by subordination and misery. To fly they need to free themselves and constitute together the bases of a new society. We, in any case, understand general strike completely differently than Sorel, seeing it instead as an instrument of the multitude’s struggle for the construction of the common. But Sorel was certainly not the only author in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to see in the concept of strike a radical desire for social transformation. W. E. B. Du Bois interprets the revolts, mutinies, resistances, refusals, and flight of slaves during the US Civil War as a “general strike against the slave system” (and a determining factor in the outcome of the war).10 In Europe, strikes and social uprisings often blended together in popular understandings after the Paris Commune. Victor Hugo, Gustave Flaubert, Emile Zola, and William Morris all write about the insurrectional souffle when they describe radical social movements and workers’ strikes—strikes to put an end to hunger wages and unbearable abuses, struggles that communicate and bring everyone together, uprisings that give the bosses a taste of the pain and suffering that the poor and working classes know all too well. A destructive force is part of every strike, an ancient violence that can be transformed into a desire for liberation from the chains of servitude. Strikes change over time, of course, but these elements remain. And in fact we find these elements in all forms of social struggles throughout the twentieth century, from the Algerian Revolution to Black Power movements and from feminist struggles to student rebellions. That might explain the fascination with the Paris Commune and the Industrial Workers of the World that coursed through so many movements in the 1960s. The history of general strikes is animated by an insurrectional and constituent passion: not passion in the sense of a charismatic or thaumaturgic event, but passion that lives in the highest moments of political ethics, in the intersection of resistance and solidarity, when spontaneity and organization, insurrection and constituent power are most closely tied together. It is an act, to use the language of ethical philosophy, when rationality and love triumph together. In the “strike” passion, reason creates a dynamic of common freedom and love generates an expansive action of equality. Calls for coalition, tous ensemble, speak the language of reason and freedom; expressions of camaraderie, campaneros, sisters and brothers, are the language of love and equality. The general strike thus gives flesh to the bare skeleton of the language of human rights. Today, however, if the concept of general strike can be still relevant, it must take a new form. In the past, labor strikes primarily developed in limited and repressive spaces of the factory and were strongly tied to the industrial working classes. Today, of course, that form of strike is relatively weak. In order to renew the general strike as a weapon for subversion and constitution, we need to confront, first, the extractive powers of capital and its new forms of exploitation that we investigated in part III and, second, the potential autonomy of forces of social production and reproduction that we explored in part II. Capital functions today, as we argued earlier, primarily by extracting value both from the earth and from the cooperative dynamics of social life. Complementing this extractive power is a neoliberal administration that mixes elements of pure command—owften operated by financial markets but in collaboration with state force—with plural and fragmented forms of governmentality, “participatory” forms of command that function through networks of micropowers able to register and engage social needs and desires. This neoliberal capitalist constitution thus not only extracts value from social production and reproduction but also manages to organize consumption and enjoyment, making them functional to the reproduction of capital. Money, finance, and debt serve as primary mediations between production and consumption, between social needs and the demands of capitalist reproduction. What can it mean to strike today against this complex capitalist machine? How can we conceive practices of refusal that block the processes of extraction and interrupt the flow of capitalist valorization, “doing damage to the bosses” and wielding against them an effective, material power? These questions recall the disruptive practices of all the traditions of workers’ struggle: refusing the disciplines of work, abstention, sabotage, exodus, and more. To recognize how these practices of refusal and subversion can be translated into contemporary conditions, we need to understand, first of all, that the increasingly social nature of production is a double-edged phenomenon. When cooperative production comes to invest all of social life, when the working day expands to include all waking (and even sleeping) hours, and when the productive capacities of all workers seem to be caught in the networks of command, on the one hand, it seems impossible to carve a space for independent action, which is required to “go on strike”; and yet, on the other, those engaged in social production and reproduction have ~~their hands directly on~~ [control of] the entire apparatus. Think of projects to occupy and block the metropolis (which has itself become part of the productive system) or to interrupt the productive flows of social networks and overload websites. We need to understand, second, that in this social matrix the borders separating production from reproduction are breaking down. Too often in the past Marxist parties, unions, and theorists have maintained the centrality of “productive” labor, insisting that struggles within and against the processes of social reproduction are not able to strike at the heart of capitalist power. Such arguments often served as alibis for excluding from the “primary” struggle all except white male factory workers: women and students, the poor and migrants, people of color and peasants have all been victims of political strategies based on this view. To the extent that today the centrality of industrial production has been replaced by that of social production, struggles over production and over reproduction immediately implicate one another and are inextricably tied. Any labor struggle today must include a critique of the (sexual, racial, global) divisions of labor and, in turn, the critique of the divisions of labor must include a refusal of the extraction of value in its various forms. The social nature of production also implies that the conventional division between production and consumption is breaking down. Certainly the capitalist relationship between production and consumption, which is often governed by debt, must be broken, and the terrain of welfare (including health, education, housing, services, and the various forms of consumption) must be transformed into a terrain of struggle, through resistances and alternative projects. But consumption itself is not the problem: consumption is a social good when posed in relation to reproduction considered most broadly, that is, the sustainability of society, humanity, other species, the planet. Here we can see both the destituent function and the constituent work of the social strike. And by making this social definition concrete we can recognize the dismantling of capitalist command over consumption and the construction of a human production of humanity, not for profit, on the social terrain. A social strike must thus be able to engage and transform the abstraction and the extraction operated by capital. It must, in other words, be able to encompass the wide social expanse ruled over by finance, transforming abstraction into generality, that is, embracing in coalition the wide range of forces extending across the whole society. It must also be able to transform extraction into autonomy, blocking the capitalist apparatuses to capture value while fortifying the cooperative relationships of social production and reproduction. These two terrains are, in any case, continuous and overlapping. Although the struggle against abstraction is horizontal (gaining social extension) and that against extraction is vertical (increasing the intensity of social cooperation), together they form a powerful machine for the construction of the common. When Marx at the beginning of the industrial era analyzed how workers’ struggles forced “total capital” to reduce the length of the working day, he recognized how workers were able to impose on capital a new relation of force and also to re-create themselves. “It must be acknowledged,” he writes, “that our worker emerges from the process of production looking different from when he entered it.”11 The relationship of struggle that today is posed between “total capital” (primarily in financial form) and a “total living labor” that is socially exploited repeats Marx’s conception: analogous to the factory strike to reorganize the working day is a social strike that addresses the configuration of what might be called the social working day. This could take the form, for instance, of fighting for a guaranteed basic income, unconditional and equal for all, which would to some extent address the precarity of contemporary society and provide an autonomous space of creation. Struggle today can become decisive only when it is able to break capitalist rule over social life and create autonomous alternatives. Our analysis has thus arrived at a strange and in certain respects paradoxical point. On one side is a long history of the general strike, on whose basis was constructed the power of the workers’ movement and the Left more generally. The strike was central to the definition of the political for more than a century of socialist struggles. On the other side are social struggles, which have now transformed the face of class struggle, as production and exploitation have become social, but which often have no real interlocutor on the Left. The institutions of the “official Left” or the “historic Left” have abandoned this terrain, and chosen the parliamentary arena as the exclusive space of bargaining (no longer between subaltern classes and power but instead) between groups of power that blend into one another behind an ideological screen. So when we hear some, who criticize neoliberalism with rectitude and courage, say “let’s reconstruct the Left” it seems to us that this will be impossible until the social strike becomes central in the reasoning and the practice of what was once called the political forces of the Left. Our brief analysis here leads to three points. First, every subversive action and every social struggle must be immersed in the biopolitical terrain, the terrain of social life, and oriented toward the common. The question of power comes second. The path we must travel requires, for example, reappropriating the fixed capital employed in productive social processes and thus blocking the multiplication of operations of valorization-capture-privatization developed by finance capital. The reappropriation of fixed capital means constructing the common—a common organized against the capitalist appropriation of social life, against private property and its markets, a common defined as the capacity of democratic management and autonomous administration from below. This is a process analogous to the struggle a century ago against the reduction of relative wages for industrial workers. That required, according to Rosa Luxemburg, “struggle against the commodity character of labor-power,” that is, against capitalist production in its fundamental core. “The struggle against a decline in relative wages,” she continues, “is thus no longer a struggle on the basis of the commodity economy, but rather a revolutionary, subversive initiative against the existence of this economy, it is the socialist movement of the proletariat.”12 For us, this is a process of commoning. To construct the common, second, the social strike must also become political. It must produce a “dualism of power,” breaking away from neoliberal governance and developing practices of counterpower. It must create institutions of being and producing together, becoming “multitudinous enterprises.” The lived passion of all the great multitudinous movements of the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries, including the occupations and encampments, demonstrates not only what the social strike can mean today but also how it can serve immediately as an instrument to create organization and institution. Even when they have lasted only briefly these movements have produced an institutional desire and have set in motion a constituent machine that will be hard to stop. Posing this political terrain at center stage leads to a third point, because the very idea of the political must be renewed. The common comes first, as we said, before the political, because only the common and entrepreneurship on the terrain of the common can materially transform the world and take control of the production and reproduction of free subjectivities. The entrepreneurship of the multitude is forming historically the ontological basis of our existence. Don’t be worried that the discussion is raised up to the question of being: there is no other way to construct freedom and equality except on the basis of historical being, produced and continually reproduced in the common. Around this entrepreneurship everything can be recomposed.

#### Thus, the plan: Tactical Leaders ought to recognize the unconditional right of workers to strike.

#### The masses already have the potential for a strike against Empire- it’s up to tactical leadership to recognize it.

Hardt and Negri ’17 [Michael Hardt, professor of literature at Duke, and Antonio Negri, professor of political philosophy at the University of Padua. 2017. “Assembly.”] ask me for the PDF. // sosa

The political division of labor within revolutionary and liberation movements between leaders and followers, strategy and tactics, rests on an appraisal of the capacities of the different actors. Only the few, the thinking goes, have the intelligence, knowledge, and vision needed for strategic planning and therefore vertical, centralized decision-making structures are required. What if we were able to verify, instead, that capacities for strategy today are becoming generalized? What if democratic, horizontal social movements were developing the ability to grasp the entire social field and craft lasting political projects? This would not mean that centralized decision-making structures can be abolished, that a pure horizontality would be sufficient. In our view, in fact, under present conditions, a dynamic between verticality and horizontality, between centralized and democratic decision-making structures, is still necessary. But recognizing today’s changing social capacities allows us to reverse the polarity of the dynamic, and that shift could have extraordinary effects. Our first call is thus to invert the roles: strategy to the movements and tactics to leadership. Throughout modernity, of course, movements continually arose that refused leadership. After 1807, for example, after the king of Prussia’s armed forces had failed, organized Prussian and Austrian peasants (Carl von Clausewitz called them a powerful torch) fought back Napoleon’s army. The result, however, was the establishment of a universal draft by the Prussian monarchy, subjecting the guerrilla forces to national ideology.9 The experience of popular revolts in Spain from 1808 to 1813 had similar characteristics.10 More relevant for us are the various phases of Vietnamese popular war against France and the United States, which had characteristics similar to many other antiimperialist struggles of the twentieth century. Popular rebellions were the foundation of the anticolonial struggle, but they were eventually absorbed under the direction of the party and the military organization. Today it is both possible and desirable that the movements develop autonomous and lasting political strategic capacities

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 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.

#### We offer a plan for action and resistance -- the revolutionary general strike is a festive event that brings out the power of the masses.

Gordienko ‘12 /Andrey, Ph.D., PhD Film & TV @ UCLA “The Politics of Eros: The Philosophy of Georges Bataille and Japanese New Wave Cinema” UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/48f92067> brett

Perhaps, then, Suleiman's effort to periodize Bataille's intellectual itinerary does not contradict Besnier's thesis concerning the centrality of sovereignty to Bataille's thought? This question hinges on whether Suleiman understands the concept of “the political” as well as that of “power” in the same way as Besnier does. I would contend that when Bataille speaks of the seizure of power, he has in mind the "powerless power" of the masses as opposed to the State power. In "Popular Front in the Street," he writes: "What interests us above all ... are the emotions that give the human masses the surges of power that tear them away from the domination of those who only know how to lead them on to poverty and to the slaughterhouse.”65 Power of the masses, of which Bataille speaks, is anarchic power that differs in kind from that form of power which founds the State. The distinction between the two forms of power in turn presupposes two radically different conceptions of revolution. Thus, when Bataille appeals to the power of the masses to revolt, he calls for the destruction of the very form of the State as opposed to mere substitution of some new version of the State for its existing variant. While this distinction inevitably invokes Walter Benjamin’s discussion of the difference (originally posited by Georges Sorel) between a general proletarian strike and a general political strike (with the former entailing the complete negation of the State and the latter merely demanding that the State reform itself), it is in Maurice Blanchot's work that one finds the most precise characterization of Bataille's politics of the impossible that bases itself on the revolutionary potential of the powerless power of the people: “Contrary to 'traditional revolutions,' it was not a question of simply taking power to replace it with some other power, nor of taking the Bastille or the Winter Palace, or the Elysée or the National Assembly, all objectives of no importance. It was not even a question of overthrowing an old world; what mattered was to let a possibility manifest itself, the possibility - beyond any utilitarian gain - of a being-together that gave back to all the right to equality in fraternity through a freedom of speech that elated everyone.”66 Although Blanchot has in mind not the activities of Popular Front in the 1930s, but rather the event of May '68, his work shows a marked affinity with Besnier's decision to discuss Bataille's political logic in terms of ‘possibility’ and ‘impossibility.’ In other words, “the possibility of a being-together” that Blanchot finds disclosed in the image of the agitated masses taking over the streets is the possibility of the impossible – of the community forming spontaneously, without programme, without demands for political representation, held together only by pure effervescence. The power of the people is limitless, he insists, precisely because it incorporates absolute powerlessness - that is to say, powerlessness with respect to the possibilities of founding another State, securing the right to representation, passing new legislation, etc. Indeed, the idea of "freedom of speech" invoked by Blanchot has nothing to do with the ideal of freedom advocated by the proponents of parliamentary democracy inasmuch as the former presupposes that the people need no politicians to represent them and thus rejects the very principle of mediation. As Bataille himself puts it, “for us having the debate means having it in the street, it means having it where emotion can seize men and push them to the limit, without meeting the eternal obstacles that result from the defense of old political positions.”67 Thus, when Suleiman invokes Bataille's calls to seize power in order to question Besnier's thesis concerning the politics of the impossible, she appears to retain the traditional conception of power that presupposes the existence of the State. Besnier, on the other hand, puts forward an entirely different notion of power at odds with the form of the State: “the 'powerless power' which, resistant to all power and in that sense 'impossible,' characterizes the people.”68

#### To the state, which is the taboo on “illegitimate” means of violence, the right to strike is always “conditional” -- only a strike that exists outside the limits of the law can be truly unconditional.

Marc Crépon & Micol Bez 19; Marc Crépon is a French philosopher and academic who writes on the subject of languages and communities in the French and German philosophies and contemporary political and moral philosophy. Micol Bez @ CPES (Cycle Pluridisciplinaire d’Études Supérieures) at the University of Paris Sciences and Letters. The Right to Strike and Legal War in Walter Benjamin's “Toward the Critique of Violence”. Critical Times 1 August 2019; 2 (2): 252–260. <https://read.dukeupress.edu/critical-times/article/2/2/252/141479/The-Right-to-Strike-and-Legal-War-in-Walter> brett

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 perfect illustration of the aforementioned hypothesis. Yet, there are two lines of questioning 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 Benjamin 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 struggles is transformed into a means for the destruction of the law. The difference 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 unconditionally. 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 contain class struggles, 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, after claiming to understand the reasons for the protest and the grievances of the workers, deny that the arguments constitute sufficient 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 justifies 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) left once it gains power. What might previously have seemed a good reason to strike when it was the opposition is deemed an insufficient one once it is the ruling party. In the face of popular protest, it always invokes a lack of sufficient rationale, allowing it to avoid recognizing the intrinsic violence of a given social or economic situation, 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.

The second conflict of interpretation concerns what is at stake in the strike. For the state, the strike implies a withdrawal or act of defiance vis-à-vis the employer, while for the workers it is a means of pressuring, if not of blackmail or even of “hostage taking.” The diference is thus between an act of suspension (which can be considered nonviolent) and one of extortion (which includes violence). Does this mean that “pure means” are not free of ambiguity, and that there can be no nonviolent action that does not include a residue of violence? It is not clear that Benjamin’s text allows us to go this far. Nevertheless, the problem of pure means, approached through the notion of the right to strike, raises the following question: Could it be that the text “Zur Kritik der Gewalt,” which we are accustomed to reading as a text on violence, deals in fact with the possibility and ambiguity of nonviolence?

The opposition between the aforementioned conflicts of interpretation manifests itself in Benjamin’s excursus on the revolutionary strike, and specifically in the opposition between the political strike and the proletarian general strike, and in the meaning we should attribute to the latter. As previously discussed, the state will never admit that the right to strike is a right to violence. Its interpretative strategy consists in denying, as much as possible, the effective exercise of the right that it theoretically grants. Under these conditions, the function of the revolutionary strike is to return the strike to its true meaning; in other words, to return it to its own violence. In this context, the imperative is to move beyond idle words: a call to strike is a call to violence. This is the reason why such a call is regularly met with a violent reaction from the state, because trade unions force the state to recognize what it is trying to ignore, what it pretends to have solved by recognizing the right to strike: the irreducible violence of class struggles. This means that the previously discussed alternative between “suspension” and “extortion” is valid only for the political strike—in other words, for a strike whose primary vocation is not, contrary to that of the proletarian general strike, to revolt against the law itself. Essentially, the idea of a proletarian general strike, its myth (to borrow Sorel’s words), is to escape from this dichotomous alternative that inevitably reproduces and perpetuates the violence of domination.