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#### The affirmative’s performative semiotic understanding of capitalism and embrace of affectual gestures of resistance diffuses the revolutionary potential needed to challenge capitalism.

[Dean, Jodi. "Communist desire."The Ends of History. Routledge, 2013. 14-31.] WWEY

An emphasis on the drive dimension of melancholia, on Freud’s attention to the way sadism in melancholia is “turned round upon the subject’s own self,” leads to an interpretation of the general contours shaping the left that differs from Brown’s. Instead of a left attached to an unacknowledged orthodoxy, we have one that has given way on the desire for communism, betrayed its historical commitment to the proletariat, and sublimated revolutionary energies into restorationist practices that strengthen the hold of the capitalism. This left has replaced commitments to the emancipatory, egalitarian struggles of working people against capitalism, commitments thatwere never fully orthodox, but always ruptured, conflicted, and contested, with incessant activity (not unlike the mania Freud also associates with melancholia) and so now satisfies itself with criticism and interpretation, small projects and local actions, particular issues and legislative victories, art,technology, procedures, and process. It sublimates revolutionary desire to democratic drive, to the repetitious practices offered up as democracy (whether representative, deliberative, or radical), having already conceded to the inevitably of capitalism, “noticeably abandoning any striking power against the big bourgeoisie,” to return to Benjamin’s language. For such a left enjoyment comes from its withdrawal from power and responsibility, its sublimation of goals and responsibilities into the branching, fragmented practices of micro-politics, self-care, and issue awareness. Perpetually slighted, harmed, and undone, this left remains stuck in repetition, unable to break out of the circuits of drive in which it is caught, unable because it enjoys. Might this not explain why the left confuses discipline with domination, why it forfeits collectivity in the name of an illusory, individualist freedom that continuously seeks to fragment and disrupt any assertion of a common? The watchwords of critique within this structure of left desire are moralism, dogmatism, authoritarianism, and utopianism, watchwords enacting a perpetual self-surveillance: has an argument, position, or view inadvertently risked one of these errors? Even some of its militants reject party and state, division and decision, securing in advance an inefficacy sure to guarantee it the nuggets of satisfaction drive provides. If this left is rightly described as melancholic, and I agree with Brown that it is, then its melancholia derives from the real existing compromises and betrayals inextricable from its history, its accommodations with reality, whether of nationalist war, capitalist encirclement , or so-called market demands. Lacan teaches that, like Kant’s categorical imperative, super-ego refuses to accept reality as an explanation for failure. Impossible is no excuse—desire is always impossible to satisfy. So it’s not surprising that a wide spectrum of the contemporary left have either accommodated themselves, in one way or another, to an inevitable capitalism or taken the practical failures of Marxism-Leninism to require a certain abandonment of antagonism, class, and revolutionary commitment to overturning capitalist arrangements of property and production. Melancholic fantasy—the communist Master, authoritarian and obscene—as well as sublimated, melancholic practices—there was no alternative—shield them, us, from confrontation with guilt over this betrayal as they capture us in activities that feel productive, important, radical. Perhaps I should use the past tense here and say “shielded” because it is starting to seem, more and more, that the left has worked or is working through its melancholia. While acknowledging the incompleteness of psychoanalysis’s understanding of melancholia, Freud notes nonetheless that the unconscious work of melancholia comes to an end: “Just as mourning impels the ego to give up the object by declaring the object to be dead and offering the ego the inducement of continuing to live, so does each single struggle of ambivalence loosen the fixation of the libido to the object by disparaging, denigrating it, and even as it were killing it. It is possible for the process in the Ucs. [unconscious] to come to an end, either after the fury has spent itself or after the object has been abandoned as useless” (255). Freud’s reference to “each single struggle of ambivalence” suggests that the repetitive activities I’ve associated with drive and sublimation might be understood more dialectically, that is, not merely as the form of accommodation but also as substantive practices of dis- and reattachment, unmaking and making. Zizek in particular emphasizes this destructive dimension of the drive, the way its repetitions result in a clearing away of the old so as to make a space for the new. Accordingly, in a setting marked by a general acceptance of the end of communism and of particular political-theoretical pursuits in ethics, affect, culture, and ontology, it seems less accurate to describe the left in terms of a structure of desire than to point to the fragmentation or even non-existence of a left as such. Brown’s essay might be thought of as a moment in and contribution to the working through and dismantling of left melancholia. In its place, there are a multiple practices and patterns which circulate within the larger academic-theoretical enterprise (theorized by Lacan in terms of the discourse of the university) which has itself already been subsumed within communicative capitalism. Some of the watchwords of anti-dogmatism remain, but their charge is diminished, replaced by more energetic attachment to new objects of inquiry and interest. The drive shaping melancholia, in other words, is a force of loss as it turns round, fragments, and branches. Over time, as its process, its failure to hit its goal, is repeated, satisfaction attains to this repetition and the prior object, the lost object of desire, is abandoned, useless. So, for example, some theorists today find the analytic category of subject theoretically uninteresting, essentially useless; thus, they’ve turned instead to objects, finding in them new kinds of agency, creativity, vitality, and even politics. The recent reactivation of communism bears witness to some of the most direct statements of the end of melancholia as a structure of left desire. Describing the massive outpouring of enthusiasm for the 2009 London conference on the idea of communism, Costas Douzinas and Slavoj Zizek, note that even the question and answer sessions were “good-humored and non-sectarian,” a clear indication “that the period of guilt is over.”i Similarly, in his own contribution to the communist turn, Bruno Bosteels glosses the idea of the communist horizon as invoked by Alvaro Garcia Linera. The communist horizon effects “a complete shift in perspective, or a radical ideological turnabout, as a result of which capitalism no longer appears as the only game in town and we no longer have to be ashamed to set our expecting and desiring eyes on a different organization of social relationships.”

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

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

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

#### The assumption that signifiers are the primary mode of exchange only glorifies consumption at the expense of understanding how labor orders society – that viewpoint can only be taken by intellectuals already divorced from need.

Zavarzadeh ‘95

[Mas’ud, prolific writer and expert on class ideology. 1995. “Post-Ality: Marxism and Postmodernism.” <https://catalog.princeton.edu/catalog/1074637>] rc/Pat

This noninstrumental "consumption" is a semiotic act; "a system of com­munication" (Selected Writings 46), a mode of forming and disseminating "mean­ings" above and beyond the functionality of consumption. "A washing machine serves as equipment and plays as an element of comfort, or of prestige, etc. It is the field of play that is specifically the field of consumption" (Selected Writings 44; emphasis added). When one buys a pair of "designer" jeans, one does not simply respond to a "need" (to keep warm, for instance) but acts on the pulsation of "desire": to express oneself and in doing so become involved in a purposeless practice that is essentially an aesthetic act ("play")., post-ality is the articulation of this mode of consumption: early capitalism is marked by functional consumption which perpetuates production while post-al capitalism ("consumer society") is a break from this functionalism. Consumption, in post-al capitalism becomes an end in itself, an "excessive play: a sheer "waste"—a carnival, a re­gime of festivities and prodigalities. Consumption in Baudrillard's theory, then, is not determined by such classical Marxist concepts as "use-value" and "exchange" value but by "sign value." The signs and meanings produced through prodigal expenditure are signs that cannot be easily absorbed back into the established system of codes that now controls all significations. Consumption is both anti-production and anti-regulatory: it is a process of excessive signification that cannot be contained by the dominant mode of signification. "Conspicuous consumption" for Baudrillard is then essentially a resistant semiotic act—an act of intervention in the order of established meanings and rep­resentations legitimated by capitalism. Prodigal "consumption" is, according to him, a radical negation of capitalism. The act of consumption therefore is not ex­hausted by its instrumentality and usefulness (it is, in terms of his later writings, a mode of "seduction" a form of opposition to production and procreation); it is the signifier of an irradicable negative (that cannot be assimilated in a Marxist dialecti­cal synthesis) and constitutes the principle of post-al mutation. The form of capital­ism that could be analyzed in Marxist terms of political economy, Baudrillard maintains, has ended and, an entirely new analytics that he calls, the "political economy of the sign" (Mirror 121) is needed to make sense of post-al capitalism. However, Baudrillard's understanding of the Marxist concept of "produc­tion" as a "mirror" is not simply a misrecognition but is also ideological in the sense that the logic of its misrecognition is a class logic: it legitimates the (economic) interests of the ruling class. The Marxist theory of "production," contrary to Baudrillard, Habermas, Butler, Cornel West and other critics of the "production paradigm," does not reduce all human activities to "labor"; rather it is a theory of the emancipation of humans from necessity and the freedom from the capitalist form of labor. Baudrillard's notion of "symbolic exchange" is simply a post-al colo­nial nostalgia for "primitive" society; a transhistorical utopia for the North Atlantic elite who has freed itself from necessity—at the cost of the labor of the other—and now regards the main question of humanity to be not "production" but destructive "consumption." For this class, life is lived ludically: the playfulness that erases the use-value of the objects of necessity in order to turn them into moments of the aesthetic sublime. Post-al theories, in general, proclaim to "deconstruct" the metaphysics of labor. Consumptionist theories after Baudrillard, however, have used the deconstruction of "production" as their foundation for proving the autonomy of capital from labor and consumption from class/production. One of the main signs of post-al society, according to Stuart Hall, is that "there is a leading role for con­sumption, reflected in such things as greater emphasis on choice and product dif­ferentiation, on marketing, packaging and design, on 'targeting' of consumers by life-style, taste and culture rather than by the Registrar General's categories of so­cial class" ("The Meaning of New Times" 118). One of the un-saids of the displace­ment of production by consumption is the notion that capitalism is a response not to profit but to the "free choice" (desire) of individuals: it is the consumption and desire for difference that drives capital, and, as such, capitalism is not only not antagonistic to human needs but is in fact a direct response to them. "The private control of the sovereign consumer" is portrayed in these reactionary theories as "real, visible and tangible" (Mulgan, "The Power of the Weak" 358). Consumption in post-al theory has become the trope of the indeterminacy of production. In its privileging of "consumption," post-al theory privileges individual "choice" over human "needs": it is, in short, a class theory. Thus, even though the displacement of production is a move made in the name of epistemological neces­sity—to provide a more accurate knowledge of capitalism now—it is, in practice, an ideological alibi for what Hall's statement clearly marks: the removal of "class struggle" from the scene of the social in the interest of increasing the freedom of choice for the upper middle classes within the existing socio-economic structures. These critics announce the end of socialism and with it the outdatedness of the praxis of abolishing private property (that is, congealed alienated labor) in the post­al moment. Instead of abolishing private property, they envision an enlightened radical democracy to supplant socialism (as Laclau, Fukuyama, Mouffe, Cornell West, Aronowitz, Butler and others have advised) and make property holders of each citizen. This, needless to say, is the Thatcherist notion of property-owning democracy represented as a radical differential socialism. For theorists of radical democracy, it is only by means of conspicuous and prodigal "owning" (which en­ables consumption to become transfunctional and symbolic) that one can be resituated outside the system of exchange and be set free from the repressive utili­tarianism of capitalism. The "sign" (constructed through conspicuous consump­tion) and not "labor" is the formative force in post-al capitalism, and, therefore, it is the "control of the code" (Mirror 122) and not seizing of the means of produc­tion that is the urgent question for political struggle in the post-al moment. The post-al question, to be clear, is no longer the end of exploitation in the form of putting an end to the extraction of surplus labor (communism) but a more equi­table distribution ("consumption") among people, regardless of their race, gender, sexualities, nationalities, of the surplus value produced by the exploitation of the proleteriat. The proliferation of post-al "social movements" (feminism, anti-racism, environmentalism, queer theory, postnationalism) are part of this abandoning the project of the emancipation of humanity from labor under capitalism (exploitation) and instead instituting in its place the libertarian goal of freedom of consump­tion. The project of emancipation is seen in post-al theories as a universalizing and totalitarian undertaking (Butler, "Poststructuralism") that disregards the difference/ differance—what Drucilla Cornell calls, "each of us in her singularity" (113). Cornell is, of course, annotating here what Derrida (quoting Levinas) calls "the equitable honoring of faces" ("Forces of Law" 959) of each consumer. In restoring differ­ence/differance, post-al theories, in Bell's word, "uncouple" production from con­sumption. The emergence of theories of consumption, these theorists argue, is the proof that the "political" (the freedom of the subject) is what, in the post-al mo­ment, determines the economic. However, the popularity of consumptionist theo­ries has very little to do with the political or the freedom of the subject: it is a not so subtle device for reducing overproduction. Far from asserting the autonomy of the subject, it, in fact, demonstrates how the freedom of the subject under capitalism is always the freedom that enhances the economic interests of the owners of the means of production.

#### Baudrillard’s theory of exchange-value precludes political interventions that could liberate workers – only historical materialism can rise to the challenge of social injustice.

Zander ‘14

Par-Ola Zander. “Baudrillard’s Theory of Value: A Baby in the Marxist Bath Water?” Taylor & Francis, July 7, 2014. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08935696.2014.917844?src=recsys#\_i7

The Problems with Baudrillard's Anti-Marxism Baudrillard has lined up a number of arguments for abandoning Marxism, and perhaps as a result, his value theory has not attracted wide attention. Nevertheless, I will argue both that we can see some major weaknesses with the abandonment and also for the potential in his value theory. Although Smith (1990 Smith, T. 1990. The critique of Marxism in Baudrillard's later writings. Rethinking Marxism 3 (3–4): 275–86. [Taylor & Francis Online], , [Google Scholar] ) dealt with Baudrillard's arguments in MoP, additional consideration is warranted. Before this attack on Baudrillard's late position, I want to highlight that his transition from Marxism to anti-Marxism does not mean the rejection of all his previous insights before MoP. It should be noted that the French subtitle of Mirror of Production is critique du matérialisme historique. Baudrillard concentrates his attack primarily on historical materialism, which is only a single part of the Marxian system, although some of the central tenets of dialectical materialism also get their share of critique. Baudrillard positions himself beyond needs, beyond truth, beyond ideology, and beyond revolution. Smith (1990 Smith, T. 1990. The critique of Marxism in Baudrillard's later writings. Rethinking Marxism 3 (3–4): 275–86. [Taylor & Francis Online], , [Google Scholar] ) has convincingly refuted all these claims by showing that they are either untenable or tenable but compatible with the writings of Marx. But an important criticism not mentioned by Smith concerns Baudrillard's critique of historical universalism. The Marxist conceptions of (for example) history and material production are developed within the temporal context of capitalism. Marx conceives history as the history of modes of production, and thus periods before capitalism can also be analyzed through production, the concept is no longer temporal, and the Marxist analysis becomes universal (see Baudrillard 1975 Baudrillard, J.. 1975. The mirror of production. St. Louis: Telos. [Google Scholar] , 48). Baudrillard objects to this universalism, peculiarly enough by merely postulating that there were no dialectics in primitive societies. Poster (1975 Poster, M. 1975. Translator's introduction to The mirror of production, by J. Baudrillard, 1–17. St. Louis: Telos. [Google Scholar] ) rightly points out that this argument is problematic in several ways. Poster's strongest argument states that, if we accept that applying any contemporary concept to the past is a kind of universalism, Baudrillard is defeated by his own argument. Poster observes that Baudrillard's texts are infested with such “universalism.” For instance, his semiotic concepts are problematic, as he employs them on all stages of human societies without justification. Another problem is that Baudrillard has framed his critique so that it is in need of empirical support. He claims that there are no longer any exchange-value transactions untouched by sign values. That begs for empirical evidence, and the onus is on Baudrillard, if he is to be believed, rather than other social scientists. There may be some nonempirical explanation as to why exchange-value transactions must be dominated by sign values, but that is not the way Baudrillard frames the discussion. Instead, he treats current trends and possibilities as finalities, treats tendencies as realized states (see Kellner 1989 Kellner, D. 1989. Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to postmodernism and beyond. Stanford: Stanford University Press. [Google Scholar] ), and extrapolates wildly from interesting insights (see Smith 1990 Smith, T. 1990. The critique of Marxism in Baudrillard's later writings. Rethinking Marxism 3 (3–4): 275–86. [Taylor & Francis Online], , [Google Scholar] ). Related to this, Baudrillard makes no qualification or delimitation as to the scope of his ideas. Indeed, he tends to totalize the system of the society. This is very problematic because totalization is the germ source that will cause Baudrillard to rule out all political strategies, including his own theoretical interventions. In his later works, Baudrillard positions himself, in Smith's (1990 Smith, T. 1990. The critique of Marxism in Baudrillard's later writings. Rethinking Marxism 3 (3–4): 275–86. [Taylor & Francis Online], , [Google Scholar] ) words, “beyond truth,” yet Baudrillard's arguments (in particular those in MoP) are made in such a way as to invite empirical evidence. He extrapolates from singular cases in his search for a strategy. From studies in fashion (CS), goods consumption (MoP), and French Communist Party activity (UB), Baudrillard wildly extrapolates that every political activity has one or more sign values as its objective, making any political activity futile (including even gifts and Saussurean anagrams). But this is an unwarranted extrapolation. A political activity that is use-value-oriented is conceivable, and theorization may also be proffered as an act governed by use value. A final problem is that his later theories generally overlook or neglect many aspects of many people's current social experience. This does not necessarily make the theory false—but it needs to be taken into account (Kellner 1989 Kellner, D. 1989. Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to postmodernism and beyond. Stanford: Stanford University Press. [Google Scholar] ). How does Baudrillard respond to the many third-world workers who feel resentment over their labor being exploited? According to Baudrillard, they should rather be immersed in sign-value-related activity, such as identity management. He leaves unarticulated whether the perception of social injustice is exactly that. Before there is reason to take Baudrillard's later standpoints seriously, they need to be grounded in empirical investigations, or at least theoretically justified. What stands clear from the analysis of Baudrillard's attack on Marxism is that, while some of it is relevant, the attack is far too weak to justify abandoning his own value theory altogether—his theory from “within”—from the power of that analysis alone. And while Baudrillard simply abandoned Marxism because he thought that he had proven it completely untenable, there is no problem in continuing down the path from which he diverted.

#### Baudrillard’s methods are reductionist and erase political economy – their cynicism about alternative media only benefits the capitalist powers-that-be.

Kellner ‘89

Douglas Kellner. “Baudrillard: A New McLuhan?” Illuminations: The Critical Theory Project. 1989. https://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/Illumina%20Folder/kell26.htm

Three Subordinations Undoubtedly, the media are playing an ever greater role in our personal and social lives, and have dramatically transformed our economy, polity, and society in ways that we are only now becoming aware of. Living within a great transformation, perhaps as significant as the transformation from feudalism to industrial capitalism, we are engaged in a process of dramatic mutation, which we are barely beginning to understand, as we enter the brave new world of media saturation, computerization, new technologies, and new discourses. Baudrillard's contribution lies in his calling attention to these novelties and transformations and providing new concepts and theories to understand them. Yet doubts remain as to whether the media are having quite the impact that Baudrillard ascribes to them and whether his theory provides adequate concepts to analyze the complex interactions between media, culture, and society today. In this section, I shall suggest that Baudrillard's media theory is vitiated by three subordinations which undermine its theoretical and political usefulness and which raise questions as well about the status of postmodern social theory. I shall suggest that the limitations in Baudrillard's theory can be related to his uncritical assumption of certain positions within McLuhan's media theory and that therefore earlier critiques of McLuhan can accurately and usefully be applied to Baudrillard. This critique will suggest that indeed Baudrillard is a "new McLuhan" who has repackaged McLuhan into new postmodern cultural capital. First, in what might be called a formalist subordination, Baudrillard, like McLuhan, privileges the form of media technology over what might be called the media apparatus, and thus subordinates content, meaning, and the use of media to its purely formal structure and effects. Baudrillard -- much more so than McLuhan who at least gives some media history and analysis of the media environment -- tends to abstract media form and effects from the media environment and thus erases political economy, media production, and media environment (i.e. society as large) from his theory. Against abstracting media form and effects from context, I would argue that the use and effects of media should be carefully examined and evaluated in terms of specific contexts. Distinctions between context and use, form and content, media and reality, all dissolve, however, in Baudrillard's one-dimensional theory where global theses and glib pronouncements replace careful analysis and critique. Baudrillard might retort that it is the media themselves which abstract from the concreteness of everyday, social, and political life and provide abstract simulacra of actual events which themselves become more real than "the real" which they supposedly represent. Yet even if this is so, media analysis should attempt to recontextualize media images and simulacra rather than merely focusing on the surface of media form. Furthermore, instead of operating with a model of (formal) media effects, I would argue that it is preferable to operate with a dialectical perspective which posits multiple roles and functions to television and other media. Another problem is that Baudrillard's formalism vitates the project of ideology critique, and against his claims that media content are irrelevant and unimportant, I would propose grasping the dialectic of form and content in media communication, seeing how media forms constitute content and how content is always formed or structured, while forms themselves can be ideological, as when the situation comedy form of conflict/resolution projects an ideological vision which shows all problems easily capable of being resolved within the existing society, or when action-adventure series formats of violent conflict as the essence of reality project a conservative view of human life as a battleground where only the fittest survive and prosper.[12] For a dialectical theory of the media, television would have multiple functions (and potential decodings) where sometimes the ideological effects may be predominant while at other times time functions a medium like television functions as mere noise or through the merely formal effects which Baudrillard puts at the center of his analysis. Consequently, there is no real theory or practice of cultural interpretation in Baudrillard's media (increasingly anti-)theory, which also emanates an anti-hermeneutical bias that denies the importance of content and is against interpretation.[13] This brings us to a second subordination in Baudrillard's theory in which a more dialectical position is subordinated to media essentialism and technological determinism. For -- according to Baudrillard -- it is the technology of, say, television that determines its effects (one-way transmission, semiurgy, implosion, extermination of meaning and the social) rather than any particular content or message (i.e. for both Baudrillard and McLuhan "the media is the message"), or its construction or use within specific social systems. For Baudrillard, media technology and semiurgy are the demiurges of media practices and effects, separated from their uses by specific economic and political interests, individuals and groups, and the social systems within which they function. Baudrillard thus abstracts media from social systems and essentializes media technology as dominant social forces. Yet against Baudrillard, one could argue that capital continues to be a primary determinant of media form and content in neo-capitalist societies just as state socialism helps determine the form, nature, and effects of technologies in certain state socialist societies. Baudrillard, like McLuhan, often makes essentializing distinctions between media like television or film, ascribing a particular essence to one, and an opposed essence to the other. Yet it seems highly problematical to reduce apparatuses as complex, contradictory, and many-sided as television (or film or any mass medium) to its formal properties and effects, or to a technological essence. It is therefore preferable, for theories of media in the capitalist societies, to see the media as syntheses of technology and capital, as technologies which serve specific interests and which have specific political and economic effects (rather than merely technological ones). It is also preferable to see the dialectic between media and society in specific historical conjunctures, to see how social content, trends, and imperatives help constitute the media which in turn influence social developments and help constitute social reality. For Baudrillard, by contrast, the media today simply constitute a simulated, hyperreal, and obscene (in his technical sense) world(view), and a dialectic of media and society is shortcircuited in a new version of technological determinism. The political implications of this analysis are that constituting alternative media, or alternative uses or forms of existing media, is useless or worse because media in their very essence for him militate against emancipatory politics or any project of social transformation. Such cynical views, however, primarily benefit conservative interests who presently control the media in their own interests -- a point to which I shall soon return.

#### The 1AC’s flight from dialectical materialism to a sterilized deconstructive theory of difference makes critique and historical change impossible. Turns case and proves alt solves case because only the alt resolves the contradictions of deconstruction while dissolving the static societal dialectic.

Eagleton 81 Terry Eagleton, Professor of English Literature at Lancaster University, “Marxism and Deconstruction”, Contemporary Literature, Vol. 22, No. 4, Marxism and the Crisis of the World (Autumn, 1981), pp. 477-488. //WWDH recut

The familiar deadlock between these two positions (Italian left politics might provide an interesting example) is one which Marxism is able historically to understand. Social democracy and ultra-leftism (anarchism, adventurism, putschism and so on) are among other things antithetical responses to the failure or absence of a mass revolutionary movement. As such, they may parasitically interbreed: the prudent reformist may conceal a scandalous Utopian, enamoured of some ultimate negation which must nonetheless be kept clear of Realpolitik. "Inside" and "outside" may thus form strange permutations: in the figure of an Adorno, for example, a "negative dialectics" allergic to the slightest trace of positivity can combine with an objectively reactionary stance. For traditional Marxism, the epistemological problems of "inside/outside," transcendental subjects and subjects who are the mere play of power and desire, Althusserian scientisms and Foucaultean relativisms, subjects who seem unhealthily replete and subjects of an alarming Lacanian lean- ness-these problems cannot possibly be understood, let alone re- solved, outside of the historical epoch, the specific modalities of class struggle, of which they are at once product and ideological instrument. (Nor, for that matter, can any "theory of the subject" hope to succeed if it has repressed from the outset that familiar mode of existence of the object known to Marxism as "commodity fetish- ism.") What deconstructs the "inside/outside" antithesis for Marxism is not the Parisian left-intelligentsia but the revolutionary working class. The working class is the agent of historical revolution not because of its potential "consciousness" (LukAcs), but because of that location within the capitalist mode of production ironically assigned to it by capitalism itself. Installed on the interior of that system, as one product of the process of capital, it is at the same time the class which can potentially destroy it. Capitalism gives birth to its own gravedigger, nurturing the acolyte who will one day stab the high priest in the back. It is capitalism, not Marxism, which has decreed that the prime agent of its own transformation will be, not peasants, guerillas, blacks, women, or intellectuals, but the industrial proletariat. Hardly anybody believes this nowadays, of course, at least in the academies, and deconstructionism is among other things in effect of this despair, scepticism, indifference, privilege, or plain lack of historical imagination. But it has not, for all that, abandoned trying to think through and beyond the "inside/outside" polarity, even if it is fatally unable to deconstruct itself to the point where it could become aware of the historical determinants of its own aporia. Deconstruction is in one sense an ideology of left-reformism: it reproduces, at the elaborate level of textual "theory,” the material conditions in which Western hegemony has managed partially to incorporate its antagonists-in which, at the level of empirical "consciousness," collusion and subversion are so tightly imbricated that all talk of "contradictions" falls spontaneously into the meta- physical slot. Because it can only imagine contradiction as the external warring of two monistic essences, it fails to comprehend class dialectics and turns instead to difference, that familiar ideological motif of the petty bourgeoisie. Deconstruction is in one sense an extraordinarily modest proposal: a sort of patient, probing reformism of the text, which is not, so to speak, to be confronted over the barricades but cunningly waylaid in the corridors and suavely chivvied into revealing its ideological hand. Stoically convinced of the unbreakable grip of the metaphysical closure, the deconstructionist, like any responsible trade-union bureaucrat confronting management, must settle for that and negotiate what (s)he can with- in the leftovers and stray contingencies casually unabsorbed by the textual power-system. But to say no more than this is to do deconstruction a severe injustice. For it ignores that other face of deconstruction which is its hair-raising radicalism-the nerve and daring with which it knocks the stuffing out of every smug concept and leaves the well-kempt text shamefully disheveled. It ignores, in short, the madness and violence of deconstruction, its scandalous urge to think the unthinkable, the flamboyance with which it poses itself on the very brink of meaning and dances there, crumbling away the cliff-edge beneath its feet and prepared to fall with it into the sea of unlimited semiosis or schizophrenia. In short, deconstruction is not only reformist but ultra-leftist, too. Nor is this a fortuitous conjuncture. Minute tenacity and mad "transcendence" are structurally related moments, since the latter is the only conceivable "outside" to the closure presumed by the for- mer. Only the wholesale dissolution of meaning could possibly offer a satisfactory alternative to a problematic which tends to see meaning itself as terroristic. Of course, these are not the practical, working options for the deconstructionist. It is precisely because texts are power-systems which ceaselessly disrupt themselves, sense imbricated with non-sense, civilized enunciations which curse beneath their breath, that the critic must track a cat-and-mouse game within and across them without ever settling quite for either signifier or signified. That, anyway, is the ideology; but whoever heard of a deconstructionist as enthralled by sense as (s)he was by its disruption? What would Hillis Miller do with a piece of agitprop? Not that such "literature" doesn't positively bulge with metaphysical notions, to an embarrassingly unambiguous degree. Characters are continually stomping upon stage and talking about justice. Feminist theatre today is distressingly rife with plenary notions of oppression, domination, exploitation. Brecht, it is true, deconstructed himself a bit from time to time, but only got as far as dialectics; pre-Derridean that he was, he failed to advance beyond rudimentary metaphysical oppositions, such as the proposition that some social classes rip off others. He failed, consequently, to grasp the heterogeneity into which such antinomies can be dissolved, known to Marxism as bourgeois ideology. Viewing such dramas, the deconstructionist would no doubt wait, pen in hand, for the moments when literal and figurative discourses glided into one another to produce a passing in- determinacy. (S)he would do so because we know, in a priori fashion, that these are the most important elements of a text. We just do know that, as surely as previous critics have known that the most important textual elements are plot or mythological structure or linguistic estrangement. Indeed we have been told by Paul de Man him- self that unless such moments occur, we are not dealing with literature. It is not, of course, that there is any "essence" called literature-merely that there is something called literature which always and everywhere manifests this particular rhetorical effect. Deconstruction does indeed attend to both sense and non-sense, signified and signifier, meaning and language: but it attends to them at those points of conjuncture the effect of which is a liberation from the "tyranny" of sense.

#### Capitalism causes massive violence and inevitable extinction – the fundamental task is developing tools for organization and tactics to bring about revolution. We both defend cap is bad, view this as an indict to their method.

Escalante ‘19

[Alyson, revolutionary Marxist (duh), philosophy at U of Oregon. 09/08/2019. “Truth and Practice: The Marxist Theory of Knowledge”. <https://failingthatinvent.home.blog/2019/09/08/truth-and-practic-the-marxist-theory-of-knowledge/>] Pat

The world we live in today is in a dire state. Climate destruction continues at a fast pace, and every with every passing day, capitalism proves itself to be incapable of addressing this. Capitalist production and its endless drive for resources to match artificial market demands has created a climate crisis that leaves us on the brink of potential extinction.

Governments around the world are turning to far right and fascist leaders to assuage their fears of an uncertain future, and the most marginalized and oppressed suffer because of it. Fascism is on the rise, and history tells us very clearly what that can result in without opposition.

The decaying US empire continues to lash out in violence across the globe in a desperate attempt to re-assert its power and hegemony. Whole countries are destroyed in its desperate bids for more fossil fuels. The world burns from America’s white phosphorus weaponry.

The need for a revolutionary movement capable of replacing capitalism with something better has never been so clear. The choice between socialism or barbarism has never been so stark. More and more people are starting to realize that reform cannot save us, that capitalism and imperialism themselves are the problem, and that we must unite and band together to fight for a better world.

The question then is: how will we know what strategies, what tactics, and what ideas to unite around? If the skeptics and postmodernists are correct that knowledge is always relative and localized, then we cannot built a global and universal strategy to unite around. If they are correct then we are doomed to small acts of localized or individual resistance in the face of apocalypse. To embrace such a vision of the world (with its accompanying epistemological skepticism) is to embrace defeat.

The masses do not want to embrace defeat, they want to know how to fight back. Marxism can provide the tools necessary to engage in that fight.

Marxism, with its self criticism and its insistence on incorporating the valuable ideas of its critics has created a means for unifying workers across the globe with anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles. The Marxist belief in the possibility of true ideas, tested and verified in practice, creates the possibility for unity on a global scale. The scientific status of Marxism means that as our climate changes, as our world looks more and more grim, Marxism will adapt through struggle and practice; it will provide us with the ideas and tools we need to fight and win.

There will be no victory for the workers of the world without the ability to wield a revolutionary science. What is at stake in questions of Marxist epistemology is the very possibility of creating a philosophical and scientific basis for revolution. We must defend this possibility. We must defend the scientific status of Marxism, and must insist on the possibility of victory.

#### The alternative is embracing party politics, it’s unconditional we’re not kicking it. This means building a radical coalition that unifies all marginalized by different forms of oppression to challenge capitalism and imperialism. Black Panther Party proves concrete action outside of the state is possible and successful.

[Curry Stephenson Malott. “In Defense of Communism Against Critical Pedagogy, Capitalism, and Trump.” Critical Education 8, no. 1 (2017).] WWEY

In her discussion of the International Section of the Black Panther Party Kathleen Cleaver (1998), echoing Harry Haywood, notes that the Party understood that, “Black self-determination was not feasible under American imperialist domination” (p. 212). Cleaver (1998) notes that while the BPP’s membership was exclusively Black, their message and practice was geared more toward the communist ethic of power to the people and the unification of all anti-imperialist movements and workers’ states rather than on the more isolationist practice of Black nationalism and Black Power. Regarding the revolution in Algeria, which the CIA was concerned would pave the way for rise to power of communists through the National Liberation Front (NLF) (Blum, 2004), Cleaver (1998) notes that, “the Panthers admired the Algerian revolution and considered its victory a powerful example of the ability of oppressed people to attain power over their destiny” (p. 213). Black Panther Party members would be represented at the Organization of African Unity conferences hosted in Algeria and had visited and established relationships with workers’ statesas Cuba and the DPRK. The BPP therefore struggled to extend the communist movement in the U.S. which was difficult given the limitations of the CP-USA and the SWP as demonstrated by Marcy (1976). Huey P. Newton was not only the BPP’s co-founder, but he was also its revolutionary theoretician, and, as such, was continuously engaged in the process of developing the Party’s tendency, the influences of which were wide-ranging, including Marxist-Leninism. Newton (1995) would eventually come to adopt what is obviously Lenin’s (1917/2015) framework outlined in The State and Revolution. For example, Newton (1995), in a creative twist on Lenin, would argue that U.S. imperialism had negated the conditions for states to exist such as economic and territorial sovereignty. Newton (1995) therefore argued that the world consisted not of states or nations, but of imperialists, on one hand, and dominated or colonized oppressed communities on the other. From this point of view Cuba, China, the Soviet Union, and the DPRK were examples of liberated communities. Oppressed communities within the U.S. such as the Black community, from this perspective, should follow the example of liberated communities adopting their revolutionary goals adapted for the American context. The Panthers therefore argued for a unified struggle of all oppressed communities the world over aimed at destroying imperialism and the capitalist system in general and replacing it with communism. Under communism, in accordance with Lenin’s model, Newton was adamant that oppressed communities would retain their right to self-determination, realized under the protection of democratic centralism dedicated to fighting the counterrevolutionaries of the capitalist class. Newton also understood that racism and all manner of bigotry would also have to be eradicated through education in order for the proletarian state to be able to wither away and for communism to be able to flourish freely. The BPP’s first campaign was the establishment of a regularized armed patrol targeting the state’s Oakland Police Department due to their history of terrorizing and murdering members of the Black community, the vast majority of which represented some of the highest concentrations of unskilled, super-exploited workers. The BPP understood that the role of the police was to employ deadly force to create an intimidation-based consent to extreme exploitation. Huey Newton, who has been described as a youth of rare brilliance, at the height of his popularity, commanded the respect and commitment of the African American community across the country, leading to the establishment of BPP chapters from coast to coast. A fundamental component of why Newton was so dangerous in the eyes of the U.S. bourgeoisie was because he understood that the global proletariat was a great chain, and each conglomeration of workers around the world can be thought of as links in the great chain. What happens to workers in England affects workers and the price of their labor in the U.S. Lenin applied this insight to unions and the role of the strike. When one shop strikes and wins victories, they affect the average price of labor within the whole branch of industry, and can also inspire workers in the same region to take similar actions, thereby affecting other branches of industry. Newton, familiar with the work and tradition of Harry Haywood, employed this concept in the U.S. to understand how racism was used to push down the price of labor amongst Black and Brown workers, and in turn, their communities, and because all workers are links in the same chain, the overall price of labor within the whole country is suppressed. From this view it makes little sense to hold on to colonial structures and pressure more privileged white workers to paternalistically support more oppressed and exploited workers as a moral act because it is far more revolutionary for more privileged workers and less privileged workers to dissolve their class differences through revolutionary struggle as comrades. This requires an engagement with racial differences within the labor market rather than pretending they do not exist. The anti-communism of the American Left is so deep-seated that it is uncommon in retrospective discussions of the BPP to acknowledge that they were a Party in the communist sense that stood in solidarity with workers’ states. For example, as a political prisoner in the U.S., BPP leader George Jackson found inspiration in the political writings of imprisoned Palestinians in Israel (Pierce, 2015). The BPP not only was a descendant of Malcolm X, but they were also following in the communist footsteps of Harry Haywood, adopting much of his analysis and practice. They regularly sent delegations to workers’ states, and routinely distributed Maoist literature at their rallies. Perhaps the internal contradictions of the BPP were too great to overcome, as some commentators suggest. However great their errors were, however, the evidence seems to suggest that the FBI’s COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Programs) operations played the most decisive role in the destruction and elimination of the BPP. The same can be said of the SWP and the CP-USA who had been subjected to COINTELPRO operations since the 1940s (Churchill & Vander Wall, 1990). The goal of COINTELPRO was to disrupt, discredit, and neutralize communism and the political Left in general. Churchill and Vander Wall (1990) describe this war as secret because it was. The FBI, for example, would employ agent provocateurs who would infiltrate the ranks of the BPP in order to foment internal dissent within the organization as well as provide authorities with critical intelligence that could be used against the radicals. For example, the FBI would employ convicts as undercover agents to infiltrate groups like the BPP. William O’Neal was such a character who joined the BPP as an undercover FBI agent. O’Neal would eventually work his way up the ranks of the BPP and become Fred Hampton’s personal security guard. Hampton was of interest to the FBI because he was the Chairman of the Chicago chapter of the BPP and a dynamic, influential revolutionary leader who had made great strides in fostering working class solidarity across racial lines. O’Neal seems to have drugged Hampton and provided the FBI and Chicago PD with a floor plan of Hampton’s apartment making it much easier to execute his assassination, which was carried out in1969 on December 4that approximately 4:30 AM (Churchill & Vander Wall, 1990). Among the tactics employed by COINTELPRO operatives to neutralize the BPP nationwide included eavesdropping, sending bogus mail, “black propaganda” operations, disinformation or “gray propaganda,” harassment arrests, infiltrators and agent provocateurs, “pseudo gangs,” bad-jacketing, fabrication of evidence, and assassinations (Churchill & Vander Wall, 1990). While most of these tactics require explanations and examples to develop a full understanding, suffice it to say that the FBI’s efforts to destroy the communist movement within America’s Black working class was only limited by the creative deviancy of COINTELPRO agents. At the first Black Radical Tradition conference at Temple University in early January 2016, Mumia Abu-Jamal, phoning in from prison to deliver a keynote presentation, argued that the FBI’s secret war to exterminate and neutralize the BPP was designed to not only obliterate them, but to replace them. That is, the goal was to remove the Black community’s organic leadership and replace it with a puppet leadership no different than the way the imperialist U.S. military has instituted regime changes across the globe, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan and as is the current goal for Syria. The Black bourgeois leadership class that has emerged in the U.S. might be understood as serving this purpose. Globally, the Soviet Union, and the communist movement more generally, have suffered the same fate at the hands of the imperialist counterrevolutionaries. Whether operating within the U.S. through federal and state police agencies or outside the U.S. through the military and the CIA the physical bourgeois assault on the communist horizon has been fundamental. This imperialist thread is also another link in the chain of the global class war. The coalescing of the revolutionary center of gravity with that of the economic center will be the great turning point in...history. The first truly revolutionary outburst on the social soil of the American continent will light the flames of a new revolutionary conflagration which is sure to envelop the entire globe. It will graphically demonstrate how "East meets west” not by the construction of new and more tortuous artificial, boundaries, but by the revolutionary destruction of all of them. It will be the supreme and ultimate alliance of the great truly progressive classes of the East and West in a final effort to accomplish their own dissolution. This in turn will terminate the first great cycle of man’s development from sub-man—man—to Communist Man, and set him on the path to new and higher syntheses.(Marcy, 1950, p. 41)What Marcy describes here began to take place in 1966 with the birth of the Black Panther Party. Rather than realizing its global revolutionary vision, its leaders were murdered, imprisoned and demonized. Despite this and other setbacks, the ultimate unification of the world’s proletarian masses, united around a shared vision of communism, remains the unrealized potential of the present, capitalist moment. However, even though it is changing, the communist vision is still stigmatized as incomplete, outdated, or hopelessly Eurocentric. That is, this communist coming-to-be should not be interpreted as the violent imposition of a European conception of being forced onto non-European and indigenous subjectivities. Rather, communism offers a global economic structure where indigenous subjectivities can be reformulated after centuries of physical, biological and cultural genocide. The communist traditions ‘conception of Oppressed Nations offers a more complete picture of how the sovereignty of the world’s indigenous peoples would be an integral component of a socialist future. Marx’s notion of each according to her ability and each according to her need offers a more philosophical approach to understanding the inclusiveness of a communist ethic. Marcy’s work is crucial because he is absolutely clear that the threat of US imperialism situated in a world forever at war, makes all states dedicate such a large portion of their national productive capacity on the military to render serious efforts for socialist planning nearly impossible. For this reason, Marcy (1950) argues that the center of global capitalist economic power, which is the U.S., must develop into the center of global revolutionary gravity. Marcy therefore suggests that only through the defeat of U.S. imperialism can the unification of the global proletarian class camp be realized. This, perhaps, remains true today. Each day then, Lenin (1917/2015) grows more relevant and more urgent. Ironically enough there is a strong tendency within the U.S. Left, and the educational Left in particular, that argues that the actual communists, communists in China, the former Soviet Union, and the DPRK, are not the real communists, but state capitalists betraying the spirit and intent of Marx. The arrogance of such positions is absurd, even taking into consideration the imperfections of real existing communism. Given the anti-communist nature of U.S. society, I believe that other potential communists, people like myself who had been involved in Marxism and/or critical pedagogy for decades, might struggle with the necessary solidarity with the aforementioned communist states. This is important because members of communist parties cannot pick and choose which aspects of the Party’s platform to support and defend. Party members, correctly in my view, must support and defend the entireplatform. To clarify whata communist Party program entails I will briefly turn to the PSL as an example. The purpose here is not to provide a complete overview, but to spark the reader’s interest.

#### The role of the ballot is consistency with the politics of comradery. This results in a clean break in capitalism that allows us to reimagine political work and transcend capital’s limitations on what is possible and feasible. Absent this framing, all movements and coalitions inevitably collapse under the strain of competing interests and the lack of connection.

Jodi Dean 19 () “Comrade - An Essay on Political Belonging” Verso, 10-01-2019, http://library.lol/main/429C9EC2E2F0AA8DCC33FE2CC178B11D. Accessed 6-27-2021, WWEY

The comrade relation remakes the place from which one sees, what it is possible to see, and what possibilities can appear. It enables the revaluation of work and time, what one does, and for whom one does it. Is one’s work done for the people or for the bosses? Is it voluntary or done because one has to work? Does one work for personal provisions or for a collective good? We should recall Marx’s lyrical description of communism in which work becomes “life’s prime want.” We get a glimpse of that in comradeship: one wants to do political work. You don’t want to let down your comrades; you see the value of your work through their eyes, your new collective eyes. Work, determined not by markets but by shared commitments, becomes fulfilling. French communist philosopher and militant Bernard Aspe discusses the problem of contemporary capitalism as a loss of “common time”; that is, the loss of an experience of time generated and enjoyed through our collective being-together.10 From holidays, to meals, to breaks, whatever common time we have is synchronized and enclosed in forms for capitalist appropriation. Communicative capitalism’s apps and trackers amplify this process such that the time of consumption can be measured in much the same way that Taylorism measured the time of production: How long did a viewer spend on a particular web page? Did a person watch a whole ad or click off of it after five seconds? In contrast, the common action that is the actuality of communist movement induces a collective change in capacities. Breaking from capitalism’s 24-7 injunctions to produce and consume for the bosses and owners, the discipline of common struggle expands possibilities for action and intensifies the sense of its necessity. The comrade is a figure for the relation through which this transformation of work and time occurs. How do we imagine political work? Under conditions where political change seems completely out of reach, we might imagine political work asself-transformation. At the very least, we can work on ourselves. In the intensely mediated networks of communicative capitalism, we might see our social media engagements as a kind of activism where Twitter and Facebook function as important sites of struggle. Perhaps we understand writing as important political work and hammer out opinion pieces, letters to the editors, and manifestoes. When we imagine political work, we often take electoral politics as our frame of reference, focusing on voting, lawn signs, bumper stickers, and campaign buttons. Or we think of activists as those who arrange phone banks, canvass door-to-door, and set up rallies. In yet another political imaginary, we might envision political work as study, whether done alone or with others. We might imagine political work as cultural production, the building of new communities, spaces, and ways of seeing. Our imaginary might have a militant, or even militarist, inflection: political work is carried out through marches, occupations, strikes, and blockades; through civil disobedience, direct action, and covert operations. Even with the recognition of the wide array of political activities, the ways people use them to respond to specific situations and capacities, and how they combine to enhance each other, we might still imagine radical political work as punching a Nazi in the face. Throughout these various actions and activities, how are the relations among those fighting on the same side imagined? How do the activists and organizers, militants and revolutionaries relate to one another? During the weeks and months when the Occupy movement was at its peak, relations with others were often infused with a joyous sense of being together, with an enthusiasm for the collective co-creation of new patterns of action and ways of living.11 But the feeling didn’t last. The pressures of organizing diverse people and politics under conditions of police repression and real material need wore down even the most committed activists. Since then, on social media and across the broader left, relations among the politically engaged have again become tense and conflicted, often along lines of race and gender. Dispersed and disorganized, we’re uncertain of whom to trust and what to expect. We encounter contradictory injunctions to self-care and call out. Suspicion undermines support. Exhaustion displaces enthusiasm. Attention to comradeship, to the ways that shared expectations make political work not just possible but also gratifying, may help redirect our energies back to our common struggle. As former CPUSA member David Ross explained to Gornick:

#### Here in the debate space, an activity uniquely situated in its discussion of social issues and current events, the judge has a unique obligation as an educator to challenge the neoliberalism that pervades pedagogical and policymaking spaces.

Ball 17 Stephen J. Ball (Distinguished Service Professor of Sociology of Education at the University College London, Institute of Education. He was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 2006; and is also Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences; and Society of Educational Studies, and a Laureate of Kappa Delta Phi; he has honorary doctorates from the Universities of Turku (Finland), and Leicester. He is co-founder and Managing Editor of the Journal of Education Policy), 2017, “Laboring to Relate: Neoliberalism, Embodied Policy, and Network Dynamics,” Peabody Journal of Education, 92:1, 29-41, DOI: 10.1080/0161956X.2016.1264802, this part is pgs. 37-39

**Within Ramya Venkataraman’s writing and presentations, there is the deployment and reiteration of a particular discursive ensemble, a set of tightly interrelated and interdependent concepts, ideas, and arguments addressed to educational reform (see Table 3). The ensemble joins up a set of arguments, assertions, and assumptions, in relation to the state and its alternative, that serve as a rationale for the processes of reform of education.** The elements of this ensemble are both local and specific as well as generic and global. **They are reiterated at almost all of the nodes in the global policy network—almost every website or network event rehearses and deploys them**. Although they are articulated and recombined in different ways and given different degrees of emphasis, they have a coherence which underpins network membership. As Marsh and Smith (2000, p. 6) put it, “networks involve the institutionalization of beliefs, values, cultures and particular forms of behaviour.” **These are made up not simply of pragmatic relations, but also constitute moral and epistemic communities.** The ensemble takes as its starting point the failures of the state, and a state of crisis in education (A)—the assertion that the government schools are ineffective and unfair. This starting point is the basis for a set of linked arguments: the replacement of bureaucracy by enterprise, through PPPs (I) and/or forms of private provision (H/G); and the need for assessment (as a way of measuring and managing the system) (B); the deployment of IT, that is, assessment software and big databases (C); at the institutional level the strategic role of leadership skills and sensibilities in driving change and raising quality (D) and to leverage for change from outside agencies, in particular from strategic philanthropy (E). The private sector is given a privileged role in all of this as agents of change and of innovation (F) through direct forms of private provision (H). Leadership, partnerships and assessment are offered as practices that “work”—for which there is evidence or stories of success in other places (J). **The state then reappears in a different form (K) as a competition state (Jessop, 2002), which facilitates, contracts, sets targets, and monitors—that makes and regulates markets. Embedded and represented in these arguments is a version of neoliberal rationality and its “state phobia” as Foucault (2010) calls it, in relation to the “old” state.** Over and against this, the competition state is imagined as lean and frugal. **Bureaucracy is displaced, innovation and creativity are “released” through the participation of business and civil society actors, and interrelated opportunities are created for reform and for profit and for “worldmaking.” The elements of a new policy ecosystem are outlined here—practices, organizations, infrastructure, and incentives that enable a market in state work. All of this is a reworking, or perhaps even an erasure, of the boundaries of state, economy, and civil society**. This rationality and its mobilization and advocacy are also realized and demonstrated in socio-material practices, which are enacted in and through network relationships. Public–private partnerships are excellent examples because they are a kind of assemblage of actors, organizations, and techniques that create and activate relationships. Ramya Venkataraman and McKinsey (India) have been active participants and partners in a variety of PPP initiatives. For example, they have participated in both the Mumbai School Excellence Programme (with Akanksha, MSDF, UNICEF, and the Mumbai Corporation) and in the South Delhi School Excellence Programme (with ARK, Bharti, Centre for Civil Society, Central Square Foundation, The Tech Mahindra Foundation, South Delhi Municipal Corporation). Both of these PPPs involve nonstate actors who take over state schools, loosely modeled on and directly informed by the U.S. charter school and English Academies programs. The work that ARK is doing in the UK is very similar to what we want to do down the road…. We now have 18 academies, with 24 en route; it’ll be 50 by 2015. And the concept of privately running— education that is publicly funded is something that ARK believes it can deliver [inaudible] it’s looking to India, we’re also seeking a similar model in South Africa and Uganda. (Amitav Virmani, Head of ARK [India] now CEO, The Education Alliance) In Mumbai we’ve been involved from end to end in the implementation. There are also other cities and states, which we are currently in discussion with for similar programs …. the state government has taken our help to craft the program …. (Ramya Venkataraman) Although these practices and the forms, stories, and ideas that underpin them are instantiated in a particular way in India in these examples, it is also possible to trace their movement through the global education policy community beyond India. One can follow them through a set of relations clustered around other reform efforts, using the same ingredients in the United States and in England. DISCUSSION This paper focuses on some of the network and discursive labor of one “traveling technocat.” Ramya Venkataraman travels across and beyond India as well as across the business, state, and third sectors, and between local, national, and international institutions. She carries with her a story made up of ideas, practices, and sensibilities that address the reform of Indian education and the Indian state, and articulates new opportunities for business and philanthropy as agents and beneficiaries of reform. **She is embedded in an apparatus of relations, finance, practices, and discourse (plots and stories), “comprising variously entangled scaled agents (of different geographical reaches)” (Cook & Ward, 2012, p. 7), which moves, changes, and develops but which coheres around a neoliberal project of reform and of creative destruction.** We are able to glimpse through these relations some of the work of assembling political rationalities, spatial imaginaries, calculative practices, and subjectivities that are “both the cause and the effect of wider transformative processes” (Cook & Ward, 2012, p. 140). Artifacts, schemes, propositions, and “programmatic” ideas move through these network relations, gaining credibility, support, and funding as they do so. These global forms are phenomena that are distinguished by their “capacity for decontextualization and recontextualization, abstractability and movement, across diverse social and cultural situations and spheres of life” (Ong & Collier, 2005, p. 7). Ramya Venkataraman’s engagements in the reform movement are diffuse, tangled, and contingent, she is a speaker at many sites and events that contribute to a reform assemblage that brings together various “things” and bodies, utterances, modes of expression, and regimes of signs. Such assemblages “stand in a dependent but contingent relationship to the grander problematizations …. They are a distinctive type of experimental matrix of heterogeneous elements, techniques and concepts” (Rabinow, 2003, p. 17). **Here the grand problematization is neoliberalism**. What is evident in Ramya’s activities is the labor involved in animating the assemblage, the efforts of articulation, persuasion, exemplification, legitimation, and problematization. Concomitantly, there is the emergence of an infrastructure of organizations, a sort of shadow state (Wolch, 1990), that can incubate, disseminate, and exchange ideas—teacher certification and training, school leadership, assessment, managing and running schools—over and against the language of more traditional forms of government and support, facilitate and legitimate the activities of non-state actors. **The mix of state, business, and third-sector actors and organizations within policy and governance is changed, not once and for all, but as part of a slow and steady movement from government to governance**. At the same time, new kinds of careers, identities, and mobilities are forged within the processes of reform and the work of networks.

## Case

#### Illegal strikes solve better and aff strikes become water downed and negotiated out by the state- TURNS CASE

Reddy 21 Reddy, Diana (Doctoral Researcher in the Jurisprudence and Social Policy Program at UC Berkeley) “" There Is No Such Thing as an Illegal Strike": Reconceptualizing the Strike in Law and Political Economy." Yale LJF 130 (2021): 421. <https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy>

In recent years, consistent with this vision, there has been a shift in the kinds of strikes workers and their organizations engage in—increasingly public-facing, engaged with the community, and capacious in their concerns.[178](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref178) They have transcended the ostensible apoliticism of their forebearers in two ways, less voluntaristic and less economistic. They are less voluntaristic in that they seek to engage and mobilize the broader community in support of labor’s goals, and those goals often include community, if not state, action. They are less economistic in that they draw through lines between workplace-based economic issues and other forms of exploitation and subjugation that have been constructed as “political.” These strikes do not necessarily look like what strikes looked like fifty years ago, and they often skirt—or at times, flatly defy—legal rules. Yet, they have often been successful. Since 2012, tens of thousands of workers in the Fight for $15 movement have engaged in discourse-changing, public law-building strikes. They do not shut down production, and their primary targets are not direct employers. For these reasons, they push the boundaries of exiting labor law.[179](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref179) Still, the risks appear to have been worth it. A 2018 report by the National Employment Law Center found that these strikes had helped twenty-two million low-wage workers win $68 billion in raises, a redistribution of wealth fourteen times greater than the value of the last federal minimum wage increase in 2007.[180](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref180) They have demonstrated the power of strikes to do more than challenge employer behavior. As Kate Andrias has argued: [T]he Fight for $15 . . . reject[s] the notion that unions’ primary role is to negotiate traditional private collective bargaining agreements, with the state playing a neutral mediating and enforcing role. Instead, the movements are seeking to bargain in the public arena: they are engaging in social bargaining with the state on behalf of all workers.”[181](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref181) In the so-called “red state” teacher strikes of 2018, more than a hundred thousand educators in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona, and other states struck to challenge post-Great Recession austerity measures, which they argued hurt teachers and students, alike.[182](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref182) These strikes were illegal; yet, no penalties were imposed.[183](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref183) Rather, the strikes grew workers’ unions, won meaningful concessions from state governments, and built public support. As noted above, public-sector work stoppages are easier to conceive of as political, even under existing jurisprudential categories.[184](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref184) But these strikes were political in the broader sense as well. Educators worked with parents and students to cultivate support, and they explained how their struggles were connected to the needs of those communities.[185](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref185) Their power was not only in depriving schools of their labor power, but in making normative claims about the value of that labor to the community. Most recently, 2020 saw a flurry of work stoppages in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.[186](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref186) These ranged from Minneapolis bus drivers’ refusal to transport protesters to jail, to Service Employees International Union’s Strike for Black Lives, to the NBA players’ wildcat strike.[187](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref187) Some of these protests violated legal restrictions. The NBA players’ strike for instance, was inconsistent with a “no-strike” clause in their collective-bargaining agreement with the NBA.[188](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref188) And it remains an open question in each case whether workers sought goals that were sufficiently job-related as to constitute protected activity.[189](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref189) Whatever the conclusion under current law, however, striking workers demonstrated in fact the relationship between their workplaces and broader political concerns. The NBA players’ strike was resolved in part through an agreement that NBA arenas would be used as polling places and sites of civic engagement.[190](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref190) Workers withheld their labor in order to insist that private capital be used for public, democratic purposes. And in refusing to transport arrested protestors to jail, Minneapolis bus drivers made claims about their vision for public transport. Collectively, all of these strikes have prompted debates within the labor movement about what a strike is, and what its role should be. These strikes are so outside the bounds of institutionalized categories that public data sources do not always reflect them.[191](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref191) And there is, reportedly, a concern by some union leaders that these strikes do not look like the strikes of the mid-twentieth century. There has been a tendency to dismiss them.[192](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref192) In response, Bill Fletcher Jr., the AFL-CIO’s first Black Education Director, has argued, “People, who wouldn’t call them strikes, aren’t looking at history.”[193](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref193) Fletcher, Jr. analogizes these strikes to the tactics of the civil-rights movement.