

butchers blätter

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Dieter Lesage & Ina Wudtke Parliament and The Commune
Script
of a philosophical performance
for two voices and a turntable

Parliament and The Commune

Dieter Lesage

The set design by Ina Wudtke refers to a scene from *Die Tage der Commune*, a play by Bertolt Brecht from 1956, in an adaptation for the Deutscher Fernsehfunk, the GDR public television broadcasting company, performed by the members of Berliner Ensemble in 1966, directed by Manfred Wekwert and Joachim Tenschert.

Ina Wudtke enters the scene. From Brecht's piece *Die Tage der Commune*, she performs the song 'Die Resolution', for which Hanns Eisler composed the music. After her performance, she leaves the scene backstage.

Dieter Lesage starts reading his text, while sitting at a table in front of the scene.

Comrades!

It may seem ages ago now, but just before a regional epidemic would develop into the Pandemic that has been taken the lives of too many while deeply affecting the lives of many others, a phrase had been haunting the globe — *We are the many*.¹ Some people may think that something about this phrase is, or was, extremely troubling, if not frightening, whereas others may find this phrase is, or was, a most joyful one. It probably depends, firstly, on whether you think of yourself as belonging to the many or not and secondly, on whether you believe, in so far as the Pandemic and its practices of distancing are said to be here to stay, that the times of the many are definitely over now or still yet to come, albeit in a radically different form. In any case and now more than ever, the phrase "we are the many" raises a lot of questions and issues. What exactly does it mean? What are we saying when we say that we are the many? When do we say it? Where does this phrase come from? What does this phrase aim at? Does it assemble or does it divide? Is it true or do we just pretend that we are the many when we say that we are the many? If we say that *we* are the many when we assemble, who are the others that are not considered part of our assembly? And if we say that we are *the many*, do we say the same as when we are saying that we are *many*? Who are the many and how do they relate to those who claim to represent them? Are representatives part of the many which they represent, or do representatives belong to those others of the many, whom a history as long as the history of the concept of "the many" itself, has given the name of "the few"?

To say that "we are the many" could be understood as a poetic phrase of protest against the positions and actions of others whom we outnumber or claim to outnumber. *We* are the many. Depending on contexts and constellations, the others could be very different groups. However, whatever the context or the constellation, the idea seems to be that we who are the many and who outnumber others, should be able to determine what is to be done in, by and for the community in which we outnumber or claim to outnumber those others. If we insist that we are the many, it seems that we suppose that, if it were true that we are *the many*,

this should have particular consequences, depending on what it means to be the many in the context and constellation within which we insist that we are the many. To say that we are the many could mean that we are the *majority*. But what does *that* mean? In so far as the political community in which we are the many is organised as a parliamentary democracy — which is not necessarily the case for all of us — and given the role of majorities in it, this could mean that we expect parliament to follow or to decide what we, who are the many, want or propose. However, can a parliament indeed be supposed to follow a self-declared majority of people who are not in parliament? Is this what we are when we say that "we are the many": a self-declared extra-parliamentary majority which claims that it should be listened to? Is it possible that, among the others which we oppose or contest when we say that we are the many, there are always already the members of parliament too?

It seems that we may have encountered the phrase "we are the many" in contexts and constellations where a self-declared extra-parliamentary majority indeed derives political claims from the fact that, although it is not in parliament, it constitutes or considers itself a majority of the population and thus something to be reckoned with, also by parliament, whatever the actual majority in parliament may be. If we say that *we* are the many, we sometimes mean to say that we are *more* the majority than the majority in parliament, even if that parliamentary majority derives its claims from the fact that it has (once) been elected by (some of) us. However, it should come as no surprise that, in some contexts and constellations, the phrase "we are the many" turns out to be a contestation of parliamentary democracy itself. In that case, none of us who are the many seems to expect anything from parliament and its elected members, as their majority seems to be a very different one from the one that we say that *we* are. If there is something troubling about the phrase "we are the many", then it probably is this radical ambiguity or the ambiguity of its radicality. If we say that we are the many, do we actually demand something from those who are considered to be our representatives in parliament, or do we, to the contrary, believe that we can only be represented by the many that we are ourselves? What exactly is, conceptually speaking, the relationship between Parliament and the Many?

It could seem that for those who claim to be the many and who contest parliament the alternative would be between a struggle for power within the *constituted parliamentary powers* that be or a struggle for the foundation of a radically different organisation of society by the *constituent powers* that the many are, or are becoming. This could mean that, as the many and against the constitutive powers of parliament, we put forward the constituent project of our assembly. It may seem as if Assembly is being proposed as the name of a constellation which would be more democratic than Parliament. In what way would that be the case? Is it that we, who are the many or claim to be so, contrary to Parliament, are talking for everybody when we assemble? Apart from those



who march against elected politicians only in order to announce that they will elect *other* politicians at the next electoral opportunity, what about those anarchists who march along with us, don't consider themselves as "the many" and nevertheless contest the constituted powers that be in such a way that they consider themselves as a *destituent power*, as a power that aims at destructing the constituted powers that be, among which parliament is a most prominent one? Thus we who are the many and may believe that our assembly is becoming a constituent power, find ourselves together with, on one hand, protesters who just look forward to new elections and on the other hand protesters who want nothing less than to bring down and destitute the powers that be, including its elective principle and its majority rule, without supporting the emergence of an alternative constituent power, even if that would result in a transfer of power to the assembly of the many that we are.

Thus, roughly speaking, there seem to be *four* possible ways to understand the phrase that says that "we are the many" and to put that understanding into practice. Unlike, firstly, the simple call for new elections along the lines of the *constituted* powers that be, which could verify the claim of the many that they are the many, or secondly, the belief in the many as a *constituent* power which is able to organise itself without any political apparatus, or thirdly, the *destituent* call for action against the constituted powers and their monopoly of violence, the phrase that says that "we are the many" could, fourthly, also be understood as saying that there is a serious problem with the way in which majorities are constructed, without calling into question the elective principle, the principle of representation, nor even the majority rule as such. Thus the phrase "We are the many" becomes a *deconstituent* call for a deconstruction of the constitution that is formally supposed to define the competences of national and regional parliament(s), whereby the constituency for a Parliament to come would be reimagined. Therefore, comrades, I ask you to join me in my support for an upcoming campaign: *The parliaments for the many! Die Parlamente den Vielen!*

As such, the phrase that says that "we are the many" puts us on a track for a *radical theory of Parliament*. What could become, if any, the place of Parliament within a radical theory of politics? Could the Assembly of the many that we are be considered as a prefiguration of a Parliament to come? According to Jacques Derrida, what is called democracy today isn't democracy yet and necessarily so, as there will always be a gap between factual democracy and its essence.² In that sense, a thorough critique of *really existing parliamentarism* would still allow and even encourage us to defend an *Idea of Parliament*, which necessarily would be the Idea of a Parliament *to come*. If one accepts Derrida's concept of a democracy to come, why should one necessarily believe that Parliament has already arrived? Does the concept of a democracy to come necessarily come down to an idea of democracy in which Parliament has disappeared? If one believes that a democracy to

come presupposes the disappearance of Parliament, one seems to believe that Parliament has already arrived, which is all but sure. The trouble with really existing parliaments seems that they are not (yet) what they promise to be. However, is there another way for Parliament to exist than as an unfulfilled promise of representation?³

Nevertheless, many people today believe that Parliament has indeed arrived, at least since two centuries, if not longer. Some of these people, however, also believe that today parliament should be disposed with. These voices are getting louder. It sometimes seems as if even some of our friends joined that choir. The idea that parliamentary democracy is to be rejected *as such* is being defended, both by some of the most prominent philosophical voices in contemporary political theory, as well as by anonymous voices, hiding behind intriguing names of collectives such as The Invisible Committee, Tiqqun and Kamo. They all argue for forms of political organisation or disorganisation that presuppose nothing less than the destruction of parliamentary democracy as we know it. Whatever the philosophical differences, whether subtle or brutal, between these voices — and there are many — they all seem to agree that today nothing emancipatory is to be expected from the idea of parliamentary democracy, whether one believes that the trouble is either with the concept of representation, or with the elective principle, or with the majority rule, or with the organisational role of the party, or with the idea of democracy as such, or with a particular combination of these ideas, principles and rules. In many texts, tones and languages, and with great resonance, some of these voices have expressed their utter hatred against parliamentary democracy, while claiming that it is, in truth, the defenders of parliamentary democracy who really hate democracy. What is called parliamentary democracy is in fact, according to Jacques Rancière, nothing but an oligarchical state of law. If there ever was such a thing, he claims, the vitality of parliament is a thing of the past.⁴ However, is it necessary to evacuate the Idea of Parliament from a radical thinking of democracy or, to the contrary, is it possible to conceive of an Idea of Parliament in a way so radical that it would even appeal to Jacques Rancière?

Over the past three decades, there has been a vivid global philosophical debate, still ongoing, not only on the question whether parliamentary democracy is indeed to be preferred as the best form of political organisation of society, as liberal theoreticians were hasty to triumphantly declare after the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet-Union, but also on the question whether so-called parliamentary democracy is democratic at all. Against the background of an irritatingly triumphant economic liberalism with its embrace of parliamentarism, many comrades and friends on the left have been bashing parliamentarism *as such*, up to a point where it seems almost logical to think that leftist radicality *presupposes* anti-parliamentarism. For these voices and their followers, "radical parliamentarism" must sound like an oxymoron. Can there be anything

radical about parliamentarism? Is parliamentarism not the certified way to end all radicality? If you take the defense of parliamentarism, you are very likely to be framed as a defender of a (capitalist) status quo, whereas parliamentarism acknowledges precisely the principled extraordinary power of Parliament to bring legitimate change, a change that is desired by the many. It is time to expose (leftist) anti-parliamentarism as an ideology much more dangerous than almost any form of parliamentary populism. Indeed, as radical democrats, we prefer to struggle with the formalities of parliamentarism even if it occasionally brings with it the election of awkward politicians due to their most saddening popularity, rather than to rave about the undemocratic radicality of the day which appears to be hip.

Today, the French anonymous collective The Invisible Committee is probably writing the most explicit lyrics of aversion against parliamentary democracy. Now, dear comrades, let it be clear that I have a serious problem with the proposals of our invisible friends. In order not to be accused of attacking them unfairly, I will take painstaking efforts in order to quote them and their friends correctly. In its famous manifesto *The Coming Insurrection*, The Invisible Committee shares with Jacques Rancière a consensus on ordinary politics, understood as parliamentary democracy, as characterised by a managerial consensus: "The sphere of political representation has come to a close. From left to right, it's the same nothingness striking the pose of an emperor or a savior, the same sales assistants adjusting their discourse according to the findings of the latest surveys".⁵ A classical figure of these anti-parliamentary lyrics is the refusal of participation in elections. Elections are considered as a dirty trick to legitimise parliamentary democracy. The Invisible Committee is eager to invoke the masses which are considered "the populace" by the elites as supporting its anti-electoral position and congratulates it with its wisdom: "Those who still vote seem to have no other intention than to desecrate the ballot box by voting as a pure act of protest. We're beginning to suspect that it's only *against voting itself* that people continue to vote".⁶

For the "we" that is The Invisible Committee, it seems clear who "the others" are: they are, first and foremost, the elected politicians, the members of city and regional councils, the members of parliament and government, the heads of state, as well as all other representatives: representatives of political parties, unions, institutions, firms and associations. Thus, among its insurrectionary proposals, there is the radical idea to "sabotage every representative authority".⁷ The Invisible Committee doesn't only oppose the institutions of representative democracy, it opposes the idea of representation itself. Whatever their own global aspirations, the only format of political organisation which The Invisible Committee endorses, is the commune: "A commune forms every time a few people, freed from their individual straightjackets, decide to rely only on themselves and measure their strength against reality. Every wildcat strike is a commune; every building

occupied collectively and on a clear basis is a commune".⁸ These "few" could become "many" through a multiplication of communes: "The commune is the basic unity of partisan reality. An insurrectional surge may be nothing more than a multiplication of communes, their coming into contact and forming of ties. As events unfold, communes will either merge into larger entities or fragment".⁹

Along these lines of reasoning, *parliamentarism* cannot be anything but a conservative, if not a reactionary political position. Parliamentarism is the name of a democracy that The Invisible Committee and some of the most outstanding voices in contemporary political theory reject, even if they do so in different tones and styles and do not necessarily like to be identified with one another.¹⁰ For sure, some of the more philosophical voices, considering themselves true democrats, reject parliamentarism in the name of true democracy. For them, parliamentarism cannot be considered as a form of democracy. Rather it is a form of oligarchy, if not of dictatorship. Alain Badiou is among the most outspoken anti-parliamentarian philosophers in his critique of the ideological reduction of the idea of democracy to what he proposes to call *capital-parliamentarism*.¹¹ What is called "democracy" today is in fact the particular form of political organisation that is parliamentarism, which, according to Badiou, not only presupposes the state as the unique space of its actions, but also mainly serves the interests of capital.¹²

Obviously, leftist critique of parliamentarism is not new, as it echoes well-known reflexions by Marx and Lenin, among others. Wasn't it Lenin who, in his interpretation of Marx' comments on the 1871 Paris Commune, wrote that the capitalist state is, in fact, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie? And isn't it therefore that he claimed that it was legitimate that in communism it would be replaced by the dictatorship of the proletariat? "Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same: all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the *dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*. The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield a tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: *the dictatorship of the proletariat*".¹³ For Lenin, the dictatorship of the proletariat is, in truth, democratic, as it guarantees that the majority of the people rules, whereas with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie it is a minority that rules. As a minority can only rule in a violent way, to end the violent rule of the bourgeoisie will necessitate the use of violence too. However, as soon as the dictatorship of the proletariat will be installed, it will be able to rule in a less violent way than the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, as it will be based on the rule of the majority, which will need less violence in order to keep the minority in check. Thus, the dictatorship of the proletariat is, at least implicitly, legitimised by the identification of the proletariat as the Many. If the Many are those who rule in a democracy, and if the proletariat is the Many, then the dictatorship of the proletariat is in truth democratic.

Today's radical anti-parliamentarianism of anarcho-communist collectives such as The Invisible Committee and communist philosophers like Badiou, however, nurtures particular principled aversions (against representation, against elections, against majorities), which are not to be found in the same principled way in the founding fathers of Marxism-Leninism. Contrary to The Invisible Committee, Lenin didn't oppose in a principled way the idea of representation, not even the idea of elections and certainly not the idea of majorities, whatever his critique of the particular forms that representation had taken in the bourgeois parliamentarianism of his times. In *State and Revolution*, written in August-September 1917 and published shortly after the October Revolution, Lenin remarks: "To decide once every few years which members of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament — this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarianism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics. But if we deal with the question of the state, and if we consider parliamentarianism as one of the institutions of the state, from the point of view of the tasks of the proletariat in this field, what is the way out of parliamentarianism? How can it be dispensed with? [...] *The way out of parliamentarianism is not, of course, the abolition of representative institutions and the elective principle, but the conversion of the representative institutions from talking shops into "working" bodies.*"¹⁴ At this point in his reading of Marx, Lenin repeats an earlier quote from the 1871 essay *The Civil War in France*, written shortly after the events in Paris: "The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time"¹⁵ Apparently, the trouble with parliament seems to be, not that it is a representative institution, as Lenin doesn't want to get rid neither of representative institutions, nor of the elective principle. The trouble with parliament is that it has no power, as real power resides in the state administration and the ministerial cabinets, which allows Lenin, after repeating for the third time a part of his quote from Marx, to polemically picture social-democratic representatives in bourgeois parliaments as people who don't do anything but talk: "A working, not a parliamentary body" — this is a blow straight from the shoulder at the present-day parliamentarians and parliamentary 'lap-dogs' of Social-Democracy! Take any parliamentary country, from America to Switzerland, from France to Britain, Norway and so forth — in these countries the real business of 'state' is performed behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, chancelleries, and General Staffs. Parliament is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the 'common people'¹⁶

For Lenin, the difference between parliament and the committees of the Paris Commune is that the committees are both legislative and executive. At the same time he insists — twice — that the Paris Commune didn't abolish representation and representative institutions: "The Commune substitutes for the venal and rotten parliamentarianism of bourgeois society institutions in which freedom of opinion and discussion does not degenerate into deception, for

the parliamentarians themselves have to work, have to execute their own laws, have themselves to test the results achieved in reality, and to account directly to their constituents. Representative institutions remain, but there is *no* parliamentarianism here as a special system, as the division of labour between the legislative and the executive, as a privileged position for the deputies. We cannot imagine democracy, even proletarian democracy, without representative institutions, but we can and *must* imagine democracy without parliamentarianism, if criticism of bourgeois society is not mere words for us, if the desire to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie is our earnest and sincere desire, and not a mere 'election' cry for catching workers' votes [...]"¹⁷ Shouldn't one conclude that Lenin clearly and literally argues against parliamentarianism? I don't think so. It could be argued, that, if one accepts that representation is at the core of the desired democracy to come and that this democracy cannot be conceived without some form of representation, to keep certain forms of representation, as the Paris Commune did, is to save at least a certain Idea of Parliament, even if its representative institutions don't go by the name of parliament and get additional competences, apart from their traditional legislative ones. Then it should come as no surprise that supporters of the Invisible Committee's anti-parliamentarianism, even if they endorse the commune as a political organisation, fiercely blame the moment when the Paris Commune gets "parliamentarian". According to another group of anonymous French revolutionaries which calls itself Kamo and historian Eric Hazan, founder of Editions La Fabrique, which publishes The Invisible Committee's manifestos, this parliamentarian turn of the Paris Commune is precisely one of the causes of its ultimate defeat: "In March 1871, the unelected Central Committee of the National Guard [...] organized the seizure of power by the people, put reaction to flight, and took over the running of public services. Everything changed when this committee made way for the General Council of the Commune. Regularly elected by the twenty arrondissements of Paris, this body proved incapable of organizing the resistance and wasted time on sterile discussions between its authoritarian majority and a more or less libertarian minority — an exemplary case of the ravages of parliamentarianism in a time of revolution"¹⁸ For The Invisible Committee, Kamo, Eric Hazan and friends, politics is definitely not about becoming the many in the sense of acquiring legitimacy in a majoritarian way through elections. In their view, the Paris Commune was successful, as long as it was led by the unelected Central Committee of the National Guard, "a 'gathering of obscure figures', according to the historian Lissagaray, which lacked formal legitimacy"¹⁹ Strangely enough, The Invisible Committee seems to share a fascination for the efficiency of the unelected few with the elitist technocrats they love to hate. Which summarises more or less the problem which I have with their proposals.

If we say that we are the many, we may want to express a desire for change and therefore a discontent with the state in which we claim to be the many. Our trouble with the state can have at least

two different meanings: either one criticises the state for its actions or its failures to act. Or one believes that our troubles have to do with the state *as such*: as long as there will be the state, we will be in trouble. This difference in critical approach characterises a strong antagonism between reformists and radicals, where leftist anti-statist radicals tend to go as far as to deny any support to leftist reformism, even if this means that the state risks to become the instrument of an extreme-right politics. For Giorgio Agamben, what he calls "the politics to come" will be a struggle against the state as such. In the French translation of his book *La communauté qui vient* from 1990, which would become the obvious source of inspiration of The Invisible Committee's manifesto *L'insurrection qui vient*, Agamben wrote: "*The novelty of the coming politics is that it will no longer be a struggle for the conquest or control of the State, but a struggle between the State and the non-State (humanity), an insurmountable disjunction between whatever singularity and the State organization.*"²⁰ Elsewhere, at the very end of the series of books which constitute his impressive research project *Homo sacer*, in an epilogue entitled 'Toward a Theory of Destituent Potential', Agamben writes: "Because power is constituted through the inclusive exclusion (*ex-ceptio*) of anarchy, the only possibility of thinking a true anarchy coincides with the lucid exposition of the anarchy internal to power. [...] This is also true for thought that seeks to think the unrepresentable — the *demos* — that has been captured in the representative apparatus of modern democracy: only the exposition of the *a-demia* within democracy allows us to bring to appearance the absent people that it pretends to represent"²¹

One very simple and straightforward response to Agamben's call to exhibit the supposedly non-representative character of representative democracy, which The Invisible Committee vigorously promotes, is to stay away from the ballot box. Why bother to have the lesser evil candidate for the presidency, whether in France or in the United States, win the elections, the reasoning goes, if he or she is to become the president of a state one doesn't even want? Even stronger: from a certain radical-strategic perspective, to have the worst president ever may be considered as the best way to get rid altogether of the state which he or she represents. However, to stay away from the ballot box is just one example of what a "destituent power", of which Agamben sketches a theory, could do in practice. After a rhetorically violent attack on Antonio Negri's theory of a "constituent power" as a democratic concept, The Invisible Committee proposes what a destituent power would or could do: "Whereas constituent logic crashes against the power apparatus it means to take control of, a destituent potential is concerned instead with escaping from it, with removing any hold on it which the apparatus might have, as it increases its hold on the world in the separate space that it forms. Its characteristic gesture is *exiting*, just as the typical constituent gesture is taking by storm. In terms of a destituent logic, the struggle against state and capital is valuable first of all for the exit from capitalist normality that is experienced therein, for the desertion from the

crappy relations with oneself, others, and the world under capitalism. Thus, where the 'constituents' place themselves in a dialectical relation of struggle with the ruling authority in order to take possession of it, destituent logic obeys the vital need to *disengage from it*"²²

Against both Negri's concept of the multitude as a *constituent power*, which is capable of organising itself without the need to maintain or create political institutions on one hand and against Agamben's concept of a *destituent power*, which proposes a retreat from the state apparatuses of power on the other hand, I put forward the concept of the many as a *deconstituent power*. Unlike Negri's multitude, the many don't act as if there is not already a constitutional context of self-declared democratic institutions, to which the many has contributed and the most prominent of which is parliament. The many doesn't consider it necessary to re-invent its own organisation from scratch: the many is always already organised to a very large extent by a whole series of institutions with which it is historically linked. This doesn't mean that the many doesn't desire institutional change. However, its actions and reflections are articulated on the institutions which always already organise its lives. Again and again, what has been constituted needs to be deconstructed. Therefore, the many are a deconstituent power, in that they *deconstruct and reconstruct* the institutions which are part of its context and constellation. As such, the concept of the many as a deconstituent power comes down to an attempt to overcome the binary thinking in terms of radicality and reformism. To radicalise parliamentary democracy is the best way to reform it and to reform it in this way is a much more radical gesture than any radical politics has had to offer yet. Notwithstanding the multivocal leftist critique of parliamentary democracy, Parliament should be considered as a potential site of radical-democratic revolution.

In his essay *On the Critique of Violence*, written in 1921, Walter Benjamin makes a plea for *parliamentary radicality*.²³ No constitutive power has ever come into being without the more or less violent moment (and momentum) of a constituent power. Every political order in existence has been established through violence.²⁴ Therefore, however difficult it may be for a democratic pacifist to recognise, the *democratic* necessity of violence cannot be excluded *a priori*. Even more, there wouldn't even be any parliament without a history of constituent violence. Now, according to Benjamin, one of the problems with parliamentarianism is that parliaments have forgotten that they are the product of violence.²⁵

Walter Benjamin, in order to be able to believe in parliament, expects it to take radical positions, which would demonstrate that it considers itself as the product of a revolution. Instead, what one gets is compromises, which deny the violence which is inherent in the pursuit and realisation of revolutionary aims: "As awareness of the latent presence of violence in a legal institution fades, that institution will decline. Nowadays, it is parliaments



VERSAMMLUNGS-
UND
ASSOZIATIONS-
RECHT

FREIHEIT DES
EINZELNEN

FREIHEIT
DES
WORTES,
DER
PRESSE
UND
GEISTIGER
KUNDGEBUNGEN
JEDER ART

Keiner oder alle

Sklave, wer wird dich befreien?
Die in tiefster Tiefe stehen
Werden, Kamerad, dich sehen
Und sie werden hör'n dein Schreien:
Sklaven werden dich befreien.

Keiner oder alle. Alles oder nichts.
Einer kann sich da nicht retten.
Gewehre oder Ketten.
Keiner oder alle. Alles oder nichts.

Hungernde, wer wird dich speisen?
Wartet du dir ein Brot abschneiden
Komm zu uns, die Hunger leiden
Lass uns dir die Wege weisen:
Hungernde werden dich speisen.

Keiner oder alle. Alles oder nichts.
Einer kann sich da nicht retten.
Gewehre oder Ketten.
Keiner oder alle. Alles oder nichts.

Weg, Beschämte, wird dich rächen?
Du, dem sie den Schlag versetzten
Ich dich ein bei den Verletzten
Wir in allen unsere Schwächen
Werden, Kamerad, dich rächen.

Keiner oder alle. Alles oder nichts.
Einer kann sich da nicht retten.
Gewehre oder Ketten.
Keiner oder alle. Alles oder nichts.

Wo, Verlorene, wird es wagen?
Wer sein Elend nicht mehr tragen
Kann, muss sich zu jenen schlagen
Die aus Not schon dafür sorgen
Dass es heut heißt und nicht morgen.

Keiner oder alle. Alles oder nichts.
Einer kann sich da nicht retten.
Gewehre oder Ketten.
Keiner oder alle. Alles oder nichts.

that exemplify this. The reason why they present the woeful spectacle so familiar to us all is they have failed to retain an awareness of the revolutionary forces to which they owe their existence. [...] Parliaments lack any sense of the law-establishing violence represented in them; no wonder they fall short of resolutions that would be worthy of such violence, cultivating instead (in compromise) what they take to be a non-violent manner of conducting political affairs”.²⁶ According to Benjamin, the parliamentary sense of compromise might have turned as many people away from pacifism as there might have been people attracted to it due to the experience of the Great War.²⁷ What Benjamin misses in the parliaments of his days is the radicality of political conflict. Benjamin’s essay *On the Critique of Violence* may very well be a very hermetic, if not mystical text, as Derrida argues throughout his close-reading, at the same time it is (also) very much in tune with the popular sentiments on the left during his days. For instance, Benjamin’s aversion of compromise resonates very well with a famous satirical song text by journalist and writer Kurt Tucholsky. *Das Lied vom Kompromiß* was first published in *Die Weltbühne* on March 13, 1919 under the pseudonym Kaspar Hauser, and would later be popularised in the German Democratic Republic by Hanns Eisler’s 1959 composition and its performance by singer and anti-fascist hero Ernst Busch.²⁸

Break:

Ina Wudtke enters the scene, approaches the record player, removes an LP from its dust jacket, puts it on the record player and places the needle precisely at a particular point of the LP. The audience hears a recording of Ernst Busch singing Hanns Eisler’s *Das Lied vom Kompromiß*, on a text by Kurt Tucholsky. As soon as the song has been played, Ina Wudtke takes the LP from the player, puts it back in its dust jacket and leaves the scene backstage.

Dieter Lesage continues his reading, while sitting at a table.

Benjamin’s 1921 comments on parliament in *On the Critique of Violence* should be read as an urgent plea for parliament to be the site of political radicality. Parliament should voice revolutionary desires. If parliaments, which should be instruments of their constituent revolutions, become instruments in order to *avoid* revolutions, then parliaments themselves risk to become the targets of revolutions to come. With every coming insurrection, the question is being repeated whether this is just a demonstration against this particular parliament or government or whether it is a revolution against the parliamentary regime as such.

Comrades! Parliament should be radicalised, if parliamentary democracy is not to collapse! For some voices, however, it is clear that the parliamentary regime will collapse any time soon, if it is not already crumbling in front of our very eyes. Thus they have been announcing in joyful anticipation since many years. In 2007, The Invisible Committee’s manifesto *L’insurrection qui vient* predicted that an insurrection is near, while at the same time trying to

provoke it, as a manifesto is never meant to be a mere description of things that are just happening.²⁹ Even if Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi in his book *The Uprising* from 2012 holds a passionate plea for pacifist resistance against neoliberalism, he warns us that neoliberalism equals fascism.³⁰ Six years after the publication of *L’insurrection qui vient*, Eric Hazan and Kamo decreed the “first measures of the coming insurrection”.³¹ The year is 2013.³² In 2014, The Invisible Committee solemnly announces in its book *To Our Friends*: “the insurrections have come, finally”.³³ As Giorgio Agamben suggests in the *Foreword* to his book *Stasis. Civil War as a Political Paradigm*, we have reached the dimension of a “global civil war”.³⁴ The year is 2015. In the Introduction to their book *Wars and Capital* from 2016, entitled ‘To Our Enemies’, Eric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato fully endorse Agamben’s warning. The year 2020 still had to come — the year in which, at least according to some of these voices, the powers that be found a brilliant solution for the threat of a global civil war: the invention of an epidemic and the declaration of a global state of exception, which, in different national and regional modalities, more or less obliged most people to stay home as one of a whole series of measures in order to contain the spread of a virus and to prevent the collapse of the national or regional health systems.

Indeed, whereas I would propose to consider the year of the Pandemic as the promise of a return to a welfare state that takes care seriously, for Agamben, to the contrary, the year was marked by the tendency for the state of exception to become the normal way of government, whereby “the invention of an epidemic” (*l’invenzione di un’epidemia*) was supposed to remedy for the fact that fear for terrorism doesn’t seem to work any longer.³⁵ And thus it happened that the anarcho-communist philosopher Agamben became an unlikely intellectual reference for a creepy bunch of far-right conspiracy theorists whose illegal demonstrations in front of the Berlin theater Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz during the German capital’s lockdown in April-May 2020 equally claimed that the Pandemic had been invented by the powers that be in order to be able to declare the state of exception.³⁶ For Agamben, the political aim of the declaration of a state of exception within the Pandemic constellation is nothing but to consolidate the domination by the most privileged, not to provide and assure the possibility of care for the weakest. Nevertheless, Agamben’s reading of the state of exception in pandemic times has been fiercely criticised by other leftist voices, among others by Slavoj Žižek, as ideologically biased and intellectually flawed.³⁷ If one attacks the state at the very moment that it takes resolute measures in order to protect the elderly and the weak, one should not wonder that far-right supporters who think of themselves as young and strong applaud one’s suggestion that the state is nothing but a tyrant. The far-left mantra that the state is a tyrant is in desperate need of revision if it is all too eagerly joined by racists with rifles. In the United States, there have been tumultuous protests against the lockdown measures in several states, whereby leading state politicians were criticised as ‘tyrants’ who should

be eliminated. Thus, on April 30, 2020, groups of people armed with automatic rifles forced themselves into Michigan’s state capitol in Lansing, where lawmakers were supposed to debate an extension of Democratic governor Gretchen Whitmer’s emergency powers in order to contain the Pandemic.³⁸ Here, the dream of a ‘coming insurrection’ in which French leftist anarchists like to indulge themselves poetically, has nothing but the raw looks of the white nationalism of American militias which are ready to chase away from their office democratically elected politicians whose major offense it is that they care for the elderly and the weak.

Whether we deal with the manifestos of The Invisible Committee, or with the many books by leftist philosophers such as Agamben, Badiou and Rancière, they all seem to suffer from a philosophical disorder which Foucault, in one of his 1978–1979 seminars on *The Birth of Biopolitics* has diagnosed as “state-phobia” (*phobie d’État*).³⁹ Moreover, Foucault, however admired his thinking may be by Agamben, Rancière and The Invisible Committee, would have characterised the diatribes against the state of his would-be followers as nothing but “inflationist critique”: “[...] it allows one to practice what could be called a general disqualification by the worst. Whatever the object of analysis, however tenuous or meager it is, and whatever its real functioning, to the extent that it can always be referred to something which will be worse by virtue of the state’s intrinsic dynamic and the final forms it may take, the less can always be disqualified by the more, the better by the worst”.⁴⁰ In order to make his point very clear, Foucault gives an example, which is not going to make him very popular among some members of the committee: “[...] think, for example, of some unfortunate who smashes a cinema display case and, in a system like ours, is taken to court and sentenced rather severely; you will always find people to say that this sentence is the sign that the state is becoming fascist, as if, well before any fascist state, there were no sentences of this kind — or much worse”.⁴¹ Indeed, you will always find people who believe that the French Republic is a fascist country (Invisible Committee), that politics is nothing but police (Rancière) or that the Pandemic is an invention of the state (Agamben).

Comrades, there are no comrades! Inflationist critique, such as the statophobic diatribes of our invisible and all too visible friends, are but a semblance of radicality. Here it is important to be reminded of the need for *parliamentary* radicality which Benjamin discussed in one of his earliest texts and to search for a de-constituant relationship to the state. Could it be that, after Occupy Wall Street, we seem to finally arrive at the most pertinent location for occupation by the many that claim to outnumber all others and want to be reckoned with by the powers that be? When will it dawn upon the many that what we should do is to *Occupy Parliament* and chase those militias from its hallways? In any case, if parliament buildings are getting into the focus of far-right movements as sites of protest, it is definitely not the right time to give up on parliamentary democracy, as the events on Capitol Hill

in Washington on January 6, 2021, when armed Trump supporters violently interrupted the ongoing Joint Session of the House of Representatives and the Senate, amply demonstrated. The left should fight for parliamentary representation, rather than indulge in the disastrous idea that parliament can be disposed with. Thus, as Benjamin suggested, Parliament should become the site of radical political debate, if its buildings are not to become battle grounds for clashes between extra-parliamentary radical extremes. Not everything that looks like a demonstration is something we want to endorse. Some protest marches are simply despicable, as Bertolt Brecht reminds in his poem “Der anachronistische Zug oder Freiheit und Democracy”, based on Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poem *The Mask of Anarchy*.

Break:

Ina Wudtke enters the scene, approaches the record player and plays another LP, on which Paul Dessau sings his composition “*Der anachronistische Zug oder Freiheit und Democracy*”, on a text by Bertolt Brecht. After playing the song, Ina Wudtke leaves the scene backstage.

Dieter Lesage continues his reading, while sitting at a table.

The images of an armed stand-off in the Capitol in Washington during the Joint Session of the US House of Representatives and the US Senate on January 6, 2021, which later that night would continue to certify the results of the American presidential elections and confirm the election of Joseph Biden as president and Kamala Harris as vice-president, illustrate in a frightening way that parliamentary democracy as a model of political organisation is under tremendous pressure today, even literally. This is a process that has been going on for a whole century already. For Éric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato, the origins of what we could call “the withering away of parliament”, should be sought in the financialisation of the economy, which started already during the First World War as well as in the growing predominance of the executive branch which accompanied this process: “Financialization [...] achieved the elimination of any trace of democracy from state institutions. What has been hypocritically called the ‘crisis of the model of representative democracy’ has the same genealogy and follows the same timeline as the process of concentration of executive power that began in the First World War. With the imperatives of total war, national representation and the ‘democratic debate’ between representatives of the people were progressively marginalized [...]. We should emphasize that the generalization of universal suffrage coincided with its neutralization by a process that tended to reduce elected parliaments to simple institutions of legitimization of a ‘motorized’ executive”.⁴² Whereas, along these or similar lines, most radical philosophers today, from Agamben to Rancière, advocate a turning away from representative democracy, one should discuss the question how to think the radicalisation of parliamentary democracy itself.

As Rancière has argued, among others in *Malaise dans l'esthétique*, art at the beginning of the nineteenth century became radically liberated from the representative regime to which it had previously corresponded. Within this representative regime, art was identified as a way of representation according to the laws of mimesis.⁴³ Since two hundred years, another regime, which Rancière proposes to call the aesthetic regime, determines what can be identified as art. According to Rancière, as this aesthetic regime is intrinsically linked to the promise of an art that would be *more* than art, or that wouldn't be art any longer, aesthetics as the regime that identifies art, is at once the bearer of a politics and a metapolitics.⁴⁴ If at the beginning of the nineteenth century, politics has become determined by a representative regime of its own, it then seems necessary to question whether the simultaneity of this double regime change could also be understood as a disastrous division of labor between art and politics as far as representation and radicality is concerned. While representation is reserved for politics, radicality is left to the arts. Thus it should come as no surprise that, according to Rancière, art today seems to function as a substitute for “politics in the proper sense of the term” (“*la politique proprement dite*”), whereas politics very often seems to be preoccupied with the representative issues and questions related to the images it produces. Politics in the proper sense of the term is no longer political, but art is: “[...] the paradox of our present is perhaps that this art, uncertain of its politics, is increasingly encouraged to intervene due to the lack of politics in the proper sense. Indeed, it seems as if the time of consensus, with its shrinking public space and effacing of political inventiveness, has given to artists and their mini-demonstrations, their collections of objects and traces, their *dispositifs* of interaction, their *in situ* or other provocations, a substitutive political function”.⁴⁵ If there is more politics in art than in politics proper, one wonders what it is that is left in politics proper, if not... art? And thus it happened that people applauded the staggering *theatrical* — and thus *artistic* — quality of the performances of The Right Honourable John Bercow MP, Speaker of the House of Commons, during its many meetings on Brexit, while at the same time pretending that parliamentary speeches don't make much *political* sense.

Comrades! Against such a mad division of labor, according to which politics should be representative, while art has become the place par excellence where political radicality becomes visible, one may have to imagine radical forms of political representation, in order to save the politicality of politics proper. One should not give up on parliamentarism in all the possible senses of the term. Even Blanqui, the eternal revolutionary, was a candidate in parliamentary elections many times over. Today, we are in the extraordinary situation in which a parliament with its elected representatives could be a place of radical global protest. It would only need the courage to act. If parliaments refuse to become sites of radical protest and instead continue to accept the blackmail of governments, if radicality and representation are not able to meet, then we may be heading for a catastrophe: the implosion of

the democratic regime as such, which destituent powers believe would be a reason for celebrations, which it will be not. In order for time to come to a standstill, parliaments must rediscover the miraculous fact that they are vested with powers to decide and to act. If we are looking for a messianism without a Messiah, we should consider a *radicalised parliamentarism* — a multivocality of chosen ones, who could chase their neoliberal governments from the temple of democracy, which is Parliament.

Even if one can appreciate, if not admire the leading leftist philosophical voices of our times for many of their bold ideas, their rejection of parliamentary democracy is very much at odds with some of their own, most important, political objectives. They terribly underestimate the radical emancipatory potential of the Idea of Parliament. Therefore, our main endeavor should be to give the name of *Parliament*, which over the past decades has been spit out so often as if it designated the most despicable space one could think of, a radically different meaning as the Assembly of the Many.

Ina Wudtke enters the scene. She sings the song ‘*Keine oder Alle*’, text by Bertolt Brecht, music by Stefan Wolpe. When the song is finished she leaves backstage. After this, Dieter Lesage leaves backstage too.

* * *

- 1 This is the scenario of the lecture performance *Parliament and The Commune. A Philosophical Performance for Two Voices and a Turntable*, presented by Dieter Lesage (text) and Ina Wudtke (music), within the project *Funkbaus Commune*, at the Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus in Berlin, organised at the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Paris Commune. The audiovisual registration took place on March 10, 2021 and was broadcasted online on March 18, 2021.
- 2 “[...] this failure and this gap [...] characterize, *a priori* and by definition, all democracies, including the oldest and most stable of so-called Western democracies. At stake here is the very concept of democracy as concept of a promise that can only arise in such a *diastema* (failure, inadequation, disjunction, disadjustment, being ‘out of joint’). That is why we always propose to speak of a democracy *to come* [...]” — Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, intr. Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg (New York-London: Routledge, 1994), p. 64.
- 3 In his meticulous reading of Derrida's concept of a “democracy to come”, Ernesto Laclau explains: “This [...] is not a promise of anything concrete; it is some sort of ‘existential’, in so far as it is what prevents any presence from being closed around itself. If we link this to the relations law/justice, undecidability/decisions, we can see the general movement of Derrida's theoretico-political intervention, which is to direct the historico-political forms back to the primary terrain of their opening to the radically heterogeneous. This is the terrain of constitutive undecidability, of an experience of the impossible that, paradoxically, makes responsibility, decision, law and — finally — the messianic itself possible in its actual historic forms”. — Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London-New York: Verso, [1996], 2007), p. 75.
- 4 “The very vitality of our parliaments was until quite recently fuelled and supported by extraparliamentary and even antiparliamentary political action that made politics into a domain of contradictory possibilities, possibilities referring not only to differing opinions but also to opposite worlds. It is this conflictual equilibrium that has been undermined today. The long decline and brutal collapse of the Soviet system, as well as the weakening of social struggles and movements of emancipation, have allowed a consensual vision to establish itself on the back of an oligarchic system.” — Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, trans. Steve Corcoran (London-New York: Verso, 2014), pp. 76–77.
- 5 The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), p. 23.
- 6 The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection*, pp. 23–24.
- 7 The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection*, p. 121.
- 8 The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection*, p. 102.
- 9 The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection*, p. 117.
- 10 As Alain Badiou puts it in a long conversation with Aude Lancelin: “Il y a eu, il y a encore, tradition qui remonte aux Surréalistes via Debord, les coquetteries critiques stylées et les bagarres aussi symboliques que courageuses d'une certaine ultra-gauche marquée de mélancolie, incarnée en France, ces dernières années, par le Comité invisible” [Alain Badiou with Aude Lancelin, *Éloge de la politique* (Paris: Flammarion, 2017), p. 84].
- 11 See Alain Badiou, *Abrégé de métapolitique* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), pp. 19–34.

- 12 For Badiou, however, capital-parliamentarism is not compatible with the idea of humanity: “[...] if one rejoices that capital-parliamentarism is the ultimate political form finally found in which the whole of humanity is reasonably fulfilled, this means one judges that this world, where we other ‘Westerners’ live, is an excellent world worthy in humanity's eyes. Or that capital-parliamentarism is commensurable with the Idea of humanity. This is precisely what the philosopher will not be able to grant” — Alain Badiou, ‘Of an Obscure Disaster. On the End of the Truth of State’, trans. Barbara P. Fulks, *lacanian ink*, 22, Fall 2003, p. 76. The philosopher, however, should also ask whether capital would still endorse parliamentary democracy if it would aim at representing the whole of humanity according to liberal-democratic principles, such as ‘one person, one vote’? There are very good reasons to believe that a world parliament would not be supported by capital.
- 13 Vladimir I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution. The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution*, in: V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works. Volume 25* (June-September 1917), trans. and eds. Stepan Apresyan and Jim Riordan (Moscow: Progress Publishers, (1964), 1974), p. 418.
- 14 Vladimir I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, pp. 427–428 [my italics].
- 15 “Die Kommune sollte nicht eine parlamentarische, sondern eine arbeitende Körperschaft sein, vollziehend und gesetzgebend zu gleicher Zeit.” [Karl Marx, ‘Der Bürgerkrieg in Frankreich’, in: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, Band 17, 5. (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 1973), p. 339.]
- 16 Vladimir I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, p. 428.
- 17 Vladimir I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, p. 429.
- 18 Eric Hazan and Kamo, *First Measures of the Coming Insurrection*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Zed Books, 2015), pp. 75–76.
- 19 Eric Hazan and Kamo, *First Measures of the Coming Insurrection*, p. 75.
- 20 Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 85. — The French translation of Agamben's *La communauté che viene* (Torino: Einaudi, 1990), published in the same year as the original work in Italian, says: “[...] la nouveauté de la politique qui vient, c'est qu'elle ne sera plus une lutte pour la conquête ou le contrôle de l'État, mais une lutte entre l'État et le non-État (l'humanité), disjonction irrémédiable des singularités quelconques et de l'organisation étatique” [Giorgio Agamben, *La communauté qui vient. Théorie de la singularité quelconque*, trans. Marilène Raiola (Paris: Seuil, 1990), p. 88]. The same argument, in more or less the same wording, is also to be found in an article equally published in 1990 in the second issue of the magazine *Futur antérieur*, republished as Giorgio Agamben, ‘Gloses marginales aux *Commentaires sur la société du spectacle*’, in: Id., *Moyens sans fins. Notes sur la politique* (Paris: Editions Payot & Rivages, 1995), pp. 83–101: “C'est pourquoi, si l'on me permet d'avancer une prophétie sur la politique qui s'annonce, celle-ci ne sera plus un combat pour la conquête ou le contrôle de l'État, mais une lutte entre l'État et le non-État (l'humanité), disjonction irrémédiable des singularités quelconques et de l'organisation étatique” (p. 99). For the English translation, see Giorgio Agamben, ‘Marginal Notes on *Commentaries on the Society of the Spectacle*’, in: Id., *Means without End. Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 73–90: “For this reason — to risk advancing a prophecy here — the coming politics will no longer be a struggle to conquer or to control the state on the part of either new or old social subjects, but rather a struggle between the state and the nonstate (humanity), that is, an irresolvable disjunction between whatever singularities and the state organization” (p. 88).

- 21 Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies. Homo Sacer IV, 2*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 2016), p. 275.
- 22 The Invisible Committee, *Now*, trans. Robert Hurley (South Pasadena, Ca.: Semiotext(e), 2017), pp. 78–79.
- 23 See Walter Benjamin, ‘Zur Kritik der Gewalt’, in: Id., *Gesammelte Schriften. Band II.1*, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, werkausgabe Band 4 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980), pp. 179–203. English translation: Walter Benjamin, ‘On the Critique of Violence’, in: Id., *One-way Street and Other Writings*, trans. J.A. Underwood, intr. Amit Chaudhuri (London-New York: Penguin Books, 2009), pp. 1–28.
- 24 “The foundation of all states occurs in a situation that we can [...] call revolutionary. It inaugurates a new law, it always does so in violence. Always, which is to say even when there haven’t been those spectacular genocides, expulsions or deportations that so often accompany the foundation of states, great or small, old or new, right near us or far away”. — Jacques Derrida, ‘Force of Law: The “Mystical Foundation of Authority”’, in: Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, David Gray Carlson (eds.), *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (London-New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 35.
- 25 According to Derrida, Benjamin considers the parliamentary spectacle as a form of decay: “Here is Benjamin deploring the *Verfall* of revolution in parliamentary spectacle [...]. The first example chosen is that of the parliaments of the time. If they offer a deplorable spectacle, it is because these representative institutions forget the revolutionary violence from which they are born. In Germany in particular, they have forgotten the abortive revolution of 1919.” — Jacques Derrida, ‘Force of Law: The “Mystical Foundation of Authority”’, p. 47.
- 26 Walter Benjamin, ‘On the Critique of Violence’, p. 14.
- 27 “Significantly, the decline of parliaments may have alienated as many minds from the ideal of a non-violent way of settling political conflict as war attracted to it. Pacifists on the one hand are opposed to Bolsheviks and Syndicalists on the other, the latter two factions have been devastatingly and for the most part tellingly critical of present-day parliaments” — Walter Benjamin, ‘On the Critique of Violence’, p. 14.
- 28 “Schließen wir nen kleinen Kompromiß!
Davon hat man keine Kümmernis.
Einerseits — und andererseits —
so ein Ding hat manchen Reiz ...
Sein Erfolg in Deutschland ist gewiß:
Schließen wir nen kleinen Kompromiß!”
— Kurt Tucholsky aka Kaspar Hauser, ‘Das Lied vom Kompromiß’, *Die Weltbühne*, March 13, 1919, Nr. 12, p. 297. With Ernst Busch’s impressive voice and the rhythm of Eisler’s composition in mind, this is how one could translate Tucholsky’s sarcastic poem in English, while keeping its rhyme structure:
“Let us make a little compromise!
No anxieties: that’s my advise.
On one hand — while otherwise — such a thing is very nice ...
Its success in Germany — precise:
Let us make a little compromise!”
- 29 Le Comité Invisible, *L’insurrection qui vient* (Paris: Editions La Fabrique, 2007).
- 30 Referring to an argument from *Mille Plateaux*, Berardi writes: “[...] I would say that neoliberalism is the most perfect form of fascism, in terms of Deleuze and Guattari’s definition. Competition is the concealment of a war machine in every niche of daily life: the kingdom of competition is fascism perfected.” — Franco “Bifo” Berardi, *The Uprising. On Poetry and Finance* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012), p. 95.

- 31 Eric Hazan and Kamo, *Premières mesures révolutionnaires: après l’insurrection* (Paris: Editions La Fabrique, 2013). English translation: Eric Hazan and Kamo, *First Measures of the Coming Insurrection*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Zed Books, 2015).
- 32 The title of their manifesto is an almost literal quotation from note N 10, 2 in Benjamin’s *Passagen-Werk*, in which he attempts to define three key historical concepts: “Definitionen historischer Grundbegriffe: Die Katastrophe — die Gelegenheit verpaßt zu haben; der kritische Augenblick — der status quo droht erhalten zu bleiben; der Fortschritt — die erste revolutionäre Maßnahme” [Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, in: Id., *Das Passagen-Werk. Erster Band*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983), p. 593.]
- 33 The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends* (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2015), p. 11.
- 34 Giorgio Agamben, *Civil War as a Political Paradigm* (Homo Sacer II, 2), trans. Nicholas Heron (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), p. ix.
- 35 See, among other articles, Giorgio Agamben, ‘Lo stato d’eccezione provocato da un’emergenza immotivata’, *Il Manifesto. Quotidiano comunista*, February 26, 2020.
- 36 See Christopher Wasmuth, “Hygienedemo” in Berlin: die neurechte Querfront am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz’, *tip-Berlin*, April 20, 2020. See www.tip-berlin.de/hygienedemo-berlin-die-neurechte-querfront-am-rosa-luxemburg-platz
- 37 Slavoj Žižek, ‘Der Mensch wird nicht mehr derselbe gewesen sein: Das ist die Lektion, die das Coronavirus für uns bereithält’, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, March 13, 2020. See www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/coronavirus-der-mensch-wird-nie-mehr-derselbe-gewesen-sein-ld.1546253
- 38 See Lois Beckett, ‘Armed protesters demonstrate against Covid-19 lockdown at Michigan capitol’, *The Guardian*, April 30, 2020. See <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/30/michigan-protests-coronavirus-lockdown-armed-capitol>
- 39 See Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, ed. Michel Senellart, general eds. François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana, English series editor Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 76.
- 40 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, p. 188.
- 41 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, p. 188.
- 42 Éric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Wars and Capital*, trans. Ames Hodges (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2018), pp. 311–312.
- 43 “*Mimesis*, in fact, distinguished the artist’s know-how as much from the artisan’s as from the entertainer’s. The fine arts were so named because the law of *mimesis* defined them as a regulated relation between a way of doing — a *poiesis* — and a way of being which is affected by it — an *aisthesis*. This threefold relation, whose guarantee was called ‘human nature’, defined a regime for the identification of arts that I have proposed to call the representative regime.” — Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, trans. Steve Corcoran (Cambridge-Malden, Ma.: Polity Press, 2009), p. 7.
- 44 See Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, pp. 14–15.
- 45 Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, p. 60.

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