ANTIPEDAGOGIES FOR LIBERATION
POLITICS, CONSENSUAL DEMOCRACY AND
POST-INTELLECTUAL INTERVENTIONS

by

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Abstract

This dissertation discusses the participation of intellectuals in emancipatory politics. It looks into such participation from within a tradition that argues that knowledge and politics are phenomena of different nature. The concept of politics used throughout this work differs from its identification with administration, for which emancipation is determined by knowledge. It does not tie the conception of democracy to consensus. I argue that there is democracy when politics is a thought that takes place against (and beyond) existing knowledges. I call pedagogical the view according to which intellectuals occupy a central position in a politics of emancipation.

Three forms of pedagogy are discussed. First, modern education, as pedagogy of the citizen, has linked individual and collective emancipation in its promise to eliminate the inequality of intelligences. Liberation through pedagogy is paradoxical because in the master-student relation the master affirms his capacity to liberate by asserting the inequality he seeks to undo. Second, in the pedagogy of consciousness, intellectuals pursue emancipation by producing the encounter of a worker-subject with its imputed consciousness. Here the state is the intellectual centre of any project of emancipation as much as the mind maintains its hierarchy over the body. Finally, an immanent form of pedagogy appears in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's conception of the multitude, in which an intellectual proletariat operates as an organizing nucleus.

Against the backdrop of each of these forms of pedagogy I examine the fragments of a possible antipedagogy. Antipedagogy assumes that politics is a thought that everybody thinks. Antipedagogy is not anti-intellectual. Rather, by embracing its perspective, intellectuals accompany experiments of thought that seek to produce a non-capitalist sociality at the grassroots.

The example of antipedagogy offered in this dissertation is the work of the militant research of the Argentinean intellectual collective Situaciones. As conceived by this group, antipedagogy is an experiment whose quest is to find a politics that can match the exigencies of life. Their antipedagogy is founded on joint research projects with social
movements that do not presuppose the authority of intellectuals and aim at changing the values of everyone involved.

**Keywords:** intellectuals and politics; Marxist philosophy; grassroots democracy; activist research; politics in Argentina.

**Subject Terms:** social change; radicalism; communism and society; Marxian school of sociology; social movements Argentina.
To Cecilia and Matilda
“...we can only talk about the situation we inhabit, and that is already very difficult.” – Collectif Malgré Tout
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Introduction

“We’re not going to entrust our individual dignity to someone else who might do things well, but instead we’re going to reconstruct our dignity from within ourselves, utilizing our capacity for self-definition, self-determination, and self-valorization.” Neka Jara is the author of these words. She is a member of an unemployed workers movement based in the neighbourhood of Solano, in the southern suburbs of the de-industrialized industrial belt of Greater Buenos Aires. Her movement is one of the many that mushroomed in the shade of the great “free market” transformation experienced by Argentina in the 1990s. This new grassroots political culture represents a shift in the common sense of popular resistance towards a conception of politics as the creation of new values. Embraced by organizations that see themselves as experiments of non-representative forms of democracy, this new protagonism has been building a new society by mobilizing affects “here and now” rather than by embracing a vision of how the liberated society ought to look like.

Neka talks about affects that have nothing to do with the kind objectified in mass media spectacles or political propaganda. The perspective on affect embraced by her movement is denied by compassionate NGOs, bien-pensant progressive scholars, voluntaristic old leftists, and humanitarian politicians who run their campaigns on the theme of the happiness of the majority. Dignity is built upon affect in the sense that it escapes the vision that treats people like objects. “For me, that’s to feel like a woman with possibilities, able to choose how I want to live, and feel what my role is in relationship to others. It’s not for someone else to explain to me, no. And neither is it up to a vanguard to explain it to me. It isn’t for anyone to explain it to me, but rather for me to feel it and want to do it” (Neka, qtd. in Sitrin 146). One thing is clear to Neka and her comrades: the agency of the oppressed pursuing their own dignity is not set in motion by an enlightened explication.

Neka’s words summarize the urgent questions that drove me to work on this project. The fertile cultural soil of the Argentine revolt of 2001, a political unconscious suspicious of central forms of power, has been regarded by many activists as a “laboratory” for the investigation of grassroots responses to the consensus that conjugates
structural adjustment policies and representative democracy. In their pursuit of dignity, the oppressed have come to conceive their resistance as a form of creation, a creation of new relations here and now, necessarily dislodged from the cozy places that vanguards had created for them in the past century. If dignity requires no enlightened explication, then politics cannot be thought outside of its own occurrence. Legitimized positions of knowledge are not the places where politics is thought. Politics, viewed as acts that change the world, has to do with thinking, not with knowing. This separation between thought and knowledge is, in my opinion, very important to accomplish one thing: the separation of intellectuals from any aspiration to become vanguards.

These problems acquire a striking significance when seen against the backdrop of the ideas of political autonomy that have come to prominence at the turn of the twenty-first century. For the dynamics of the figure of the intellectual-pedagogue, the harbinger of the society of the future in modern revolutionary culture, is at odds with the basic wisdom that the self-determination of a group, a collective, or a movement is an autonomous process of thought, autonomous from the leadership, advice or imagination of even the most refined intellectual avant-garde of autonomist men and women of knowledge.

My quest in the following pages is to define the possibilities of intervention for intellectuals amidst the field of methodological exploration opened up by struggles for freedom and justice that refuse to place intellectuals in a central or transcendental position. I argue that the pedagogical standpoint that highlights the authority of those who know assumes a connection between knowledge and the agency of social change that has little to do with emancipation. In contrast with this, I seek to elaborate the perspective of those who believe that the power that sustains emancipatory will comes alive as the outcome of a particular composition of affects. In asking these questions I am not seeking to be anti-intellectual. Rather, I believe that we, “intellectuals,” still can and must intervene in struggles. But to do so we must abandon the pedagogical stance. This amounts to demolishing the ontological assumptions that put us, intellectuals, in the position of master-liberators, including, in the first place, the assumption that political thought only springs up from erudite knowledge.
When I look back it is not easy to discern whether I chose this topic or whether it chose me. When reality urges us with questions, to paraphrase Karl Marx's famous line in *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, we do not do look for answers under circumstances chosen by us, but under the circumstances we encounter, that are given to us, and that are intertwined with our past. That is why I cannot help remembering, at the beginning of this reflection, the changing circumstances that have shaken the definitions of intellectual intervention and social change during my long march through political activism and academia, at a time in history when the foundations of these two practices have been shaken to their core.

Rodrigo, a Chilean friend of mine and fellow activist in the politically dry decade of the 1980s, used to say that there was something mysteriously hopeful about the years that finished in ‘9.’ Many revolutions or major capitalist crises had culminated in years that ended in that number. To prove his point, he used to cite as examples the French Revolution (1789), Wall Street’s Black Tuesday (1929), the beginning of World War II (1939), the Chinese revolution (1949), the Cuban revolution (1959), the Cordobazo of 1969, one of the largest mass revolts in Argentina in the twentieth century; and the Sandinista revolution (1979). His tongue-in-cheek theory had the dubious merit of escaping teleology by distributing world-shocking events along an arbitrary series. I heard his theory for the first time in late 1988.

1989 certainly proved to be remarkable. For those of us living in Argentina, it began in January with the attack, by a so far unknown guerrilla organization, to an army base. About fifty armed citizens claimed that their intervention was to prevent a military coup that was being planned at that base. They were led by a surviving veteran of Argentina’s People’s Revolutionary Army (ERP) who had also had an important role in the Sandinista revolution and in the execution of Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza. The military—apparently adapted to representative democracy—were submitted to a human rights test, which they failed. Several summary executions and disappearances of men and women from the guerrilla group, tolerated by the social democratic Radical Civic Union in charge of the federal executive, cast serious doubts on the limits of the democratic consensus born five years earlier under the principle of keeping equal distance
from both the revolutionary organizations of the 1970s and the military who massacred them.

Less than a month later, what became known as the "market coup" put the local (and the transnational) bourgeoisie fully in control of the state agenda. Hyperinflation—one of the highest rates ever registered in the history of capitalism—threw masses of people into poverty overnight. Massive episodes of looting of supermarkets and food warehouses were met by furious repression. In this scenario, the landslide victory of Carlos Menem in the presidential elections of May 1989, with a promise to restore the values of the Peronist welfare state of the 1950s, caused little surprise. What really shocked many was the sweeping program of privatizations, deregulation, and institutional transformations he announced when he took office in July of that year.

Still, a new counter-definition of what was possible in politics in Argentina had been in the making since the return to representative democracy. This counter tendency appeared to be confirmed by the international events of the second half of 1989. First came the televised images of East and West Berliners smashing the Wall in November. In December, George Bush senior and Mikhail Gorvachev met in Malta to declare the end of the Cold War. A few days later, the United States invaded Panama and deposed Manuel Noriega, perhaps an early instance of the single-superpower geopolitics of preemptive wars and humanitarian bombings to secure a certain interpretation of democracy and freedom.

By the end of 1989, my friend Rodrigo was very proud of his theory. A sense that a major epochal change was underway floated in the air. The countries of Eastern Europe were embracing market economics and electoral democracy almost at the same pace as in Latin America, where the last remaining military rulers were being replaced by elected governments. In an article published in those days, Francis Fukuyama celebrated the "end of history." Former radicals everywhere were listening and asking themselves whether indeed the entire world was entering the beginning of an era without politics other than that which is possible within the limits of liberal democracy. For more than a decade, postmodernism had established itself as the discourse best suited for those times of uncertainty and fragmentation, affirming the waning of class struggle and the rise of a multiplicity of irreconcilable language games. Democracy had turned into the affirmation
of consensual procedures that communication machines would help advance. A nihilist sense of impotence had seized many former revolutionaries turned into fervent believers in the law and order of consensual democracy.

In the last year of the decade, while the consolidation of a new world order was being cooked under the heat of the smart bombs causing “collateral damage” in Belgrade, I remembered Rodrigo’s funny theory of cycles. The moment was gloomy. I remembered people arguing that Yugoslavs should learn to respect human rights, if necessary, by being bombed back to the middle ages (obviously, a humanitarian could not demand the same density of bombing that USAF general Curtis LeMay pursued in Vietnam with his strategy to drive the Asian country back to the stone age). In the name of human rights and democracy, NATO generals under the command of “Third Way” politicians were demolishing a country under allegations of mass killings and ethnic cleansing. Even if there was some substance to the allegations, it was clear that what Western champions of democracy and their pious intellectual cheerleaders were finding repulsive was that the ethnic cleansing was not being done by the right people, like the state of Israel does with the Palestinians, Moscow with Chechnya, or the United States Border Patrol with impoverished Mexicans. Postmodern fascism was going through its heyday. Politics had entered a time of sadness, imprisoned in a realist definition of the extent of the politically possible. No alternative appeared on the horizon while the remains of the failed socialist utopia were being auctioned among thirsty corporations. During the decade the message had been heard loud and clearly, both at the centre and at the peripheries: globalization is the only available option, “there is no alternative,” either you connect or you die, thought had become pensée unique.

The discourse on postmodernity was perhaps the tip of the iceberg, the symptom of a deep crisis. What is in crisis is the idea of progress as total determinism, now under the impetus of “free” market globalization, coupled with the crisis of the notion that only what can be known is rational. To the myth of progress belongs the idea that humankind can know everything and that, because all that is real is rational, knowledge is necessarily tied to liberation. The depletion of the ozone layer, the oil wars and the impending energy crisis, and global warming, to name only a few crises that have become household names, show that the end of the Cold War was also the end of symmetry. The dichotomy is no
longer capitalism vs. socialism or capitalism vs. communism. It is increasingly apparent that it is capitalism vs. life. But what life? The continuity of life is at stake and, like a bullet train heading towards a concrete wall at 300 km/h in which all that works is the accelerator, capitalist globalization cannot do anything to undo the damage. Yet this confrontation is paradoxical, for capitalism does love life. It has successfully put life in motion, nurtured it, and cared for it around its own project. It gives us lives in which we are said to be free to choose. In this case, freedom coincides with the prison. We can choose between brands of beer, we can choose to protest, or we can choose to stay home. The more we function as individuals and as spectators, the more we strengthen consensual democracy.

Politics is inspired in realism precisely when reality has come to coincide with capitalism. The democracy and freedom inherent in this reality follow the logic of the supermarket. We are free to choose and the opinions seem infinite. We are encouraged to cross all the frontiers we want; we can mix everything up if we dare. We, as individuals and as spectators, are the subjects of this reality and its utopia. What is discouraged and even punished is to opt out. Life is no longer supported at that point. We are encouraged to live fully and take care of ourselves. What is not permitted in consensual democracy is to live lives that distrust the reduction of life to survival, the blackmail of mortality that our precarious existences confront in the shape of fear and hope, those affects that undermine that which in our lives wants to be infinite. There is a certain immortal virtue in those who are so capable of love as to repudiate what their lives have become; those who can pull themselves together to push the definitions of the possible.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, progressive politics entered an era that years later Alain Badiou would call Thermidorean, after the counter-revolutionary convention that on Thermidor 11th, 1794, effectively declared the end of Jacobin fervour in the French Revolution. Thermidoreans certainly did not end the Terror whose end they promised. They only changed its target. In the current sense, Thermidoreanism involves the disarmament of agitation and its replacement by institutions, an objective view of economics, an endorsement of the status quo, an obsession with security, and the marginalization of emancipatory fervour in the name of peace. Thermidoreans deploy the certainties of policy and the administration of life against the precarious subjective
principles and convictions that make politics possible. For them, virtue, the subjective principle of the revolutionary conception of politics, does not exist as a category. Politics entails no subjective demands, only calculable interests that can be managed. Whether management is better when left to the forces of the “free market” or assumed by the state makes no difference in this sense. What matters to Thermidoreans is the enforcement of the separation of subjectivity from politics. What matters is the enclosure of life in the calculable trajectories of a state order that defines the magnitude of the possible. Individual freedom and the freedom of the markets go hand in hand. Global capitalism liberates individuals, mobilizes differences, and endorses multiculturalism, producing, as a result, an obvious reality that coincides with the possible.

But, not all that is multiple dances to the tune of consensual democracy. There is a subtractive form of multiplicity—subtracted from communication, from the spectacle, from the knowledge of the wise—that is connected by a bond of virtue to the revolutions of the past. Liberation, in the sense I am going to use it throughout this work has to do with the activation of the subjective sense of virtue that Spinoza called potentia. Virtue, potentia, Nietzsche’s “will to power,” conviction, militant commitment, fidelity to revolutionary principles, politics as desire to live beyond life defined as survival—in all these concepts freedom only exists as the ambivalent and fragile subjective experience of those who are striving for it in spite of consensus.

I will call pedagogical the separation of subjective political desire from what it can do that takes place in the course of identifying knowledge with what are believed to be the most capable actors for bringing about a just society. Pedagogy corresponds to a certain vision of the world, a point of view that is at once global, abstract, moral, and representational. In classic Greece, the paidagogos was a slave who led children to school. My use of the term pedagogy retains the concept of care this practice involved. A pedagogical order is one that cares. Cares about what? Heidegger defined care as that which maintained the consistency of being throughout existence. Care guarantees normality. Care is both control and self-control. Pedagogy helps to secure the consistency of the moral vision of the subordinate. It strengthens the link between knowledge and the state. I am not referring only to the state as the social and historical apparatuses and institutions, but also to the state in the sense of care: the state as common sense, as status
quo, as majoritarian opinion, all of which are the subjective foundation on which the state in the first sense is built.

This work will look at sketches of antipedagogy, conceptual fragments of emancipatory interventions that follow the traces of potentia and seek to expand it. Liberation is played in the revolt of multiplicity against the one-dimensional statification of virtue, the reduction of infinite demands to the finitude of calculable interest, and the consensual search for a proper place for every body, every thing, and every word. To overcome pedagogy is not part of the anarchist notion that the state has to be smashed, but rather belongs to the revolutionary notion that politics does not have to do with the state. Subjectively conceived as potentia, politics is on the side of creation; it is pure invention.

Pedagogies and antipedagogies can be recognized by the way in which they relate to the question “what is politics?” Pedagogy always knows the answer in advance. Antipedagogy keeps raising the question.

Resistance is rupture. It subverts the rational core of the normal situation. It is not founded on knowledge. Rather, one resists against knowledge. Studies of subaltern groups, their culture, or the political economy of their oppression do not provide a foundation for the will to resist. Resistance is an operation of thought. However, this is a thought that proceeds and works outside the rational channels, which only seize that which happens through the conscious activity of the mind. Thought always deals with what is impossible from the point of view of knowledge.

It is always possible to define and establish alternative pedagogies, with contents that challenge the hegemonic discourses and progressive methods that involve greater participation and peer evaluation. But antipedagogy is not an alternative pedagogy. An antipedagogy is a form of emancipatory intervention that accompanies processes of thought, without establishing a centre that pretends to think on behalf of others.

The era that was setting in in the late 1980s was characterized by the fall in disgrace of a particular conception of the universality of the struggle of the proletariat. One of the contending moral visions of the world had fallen; the one that remained could claim victory. Was it the end of revolutionary virtue?
The years that followed would begin to sketch a negative answer to this question. The Zapatistas, the resistances to globalization that quickly multiplied in the second half of the 1990s, and a myriad of local experiments, all explored values different from those of capitalism. These struggles had little in common, in their exteriority, with the struggles that had defined the polarity of the 20th century. They were not trying to bring into existence socialist states or national liberation revolutions. Not only were they not trying to contest state power from an alternative centre, but they were also heterogeneous in relation to each other. Even though some “antiglobalization” activists and intellectuals have encouraged the formation of networks and alliances to bring about an alternative form of globalization (“another world is possible” has been their slogan), the focus of these struggles has been local, yet absolute (“we are nothing, we want to be everything” was one of their slogans). This protagonism has retained from the struggles of the past their virtue. In this sense, the potentia they had mobilized has much in common with the French Jacobins, the Soviets of 1917, and Che Guevara’s guerrillas. It was precisely this living virtue that made them different from Thermidorian morality, from the acceptance of life as it is, and the marriage of the possible with reality.

When Argentina entered the 1990s, free market policies were already tearing into pieces national industries, public services, and trade unions, completing the work the dictatorship had started fifteen years earlier. Only now the package came wrapped in forms of consensus, freedom of speech, and the ballot box. The dictatorship, which had ended in 1983, had its Other: the revolutionary movements and organizations the juntas meticulously destroyed using the dirtiest tricks. During the hyperinflation of 1989, Argentineans experienced that the Other of consensual democracy was the image of its own dissolution, its de-institution by the rise of a multitude of nobodies. The fiercest class war ever seen was waiting impatiently to make itself visible in the guise of a multitude of people thrown into precariousness, first, seeking forms of survival and, later, liberating their creative power to produce innovative forms of self-organization. After March 2001, this new protagonism acquired escape velocity. By August, it could stop the circulation of commodities in the country at will. In October, it ridiculed consensus. In December, it ousted four governments in two weeks. For the next year and a half, there was very little the practitioners of pensée unique could do to stop the burst of politics. Even today, after
a serious effort by a progressive government to co-opt the new protagonism, politicians demonstrate on a daily basis that they know that their legitimacy hangs from a very thin filament. This work intends to find resonances with those Argentinean struggles. It uses them as illustrations. It is not about them. Nor is it my intention to present them as case studies.

Traditional forms of criticism have fallen in disgrace because there is not an "outside" to consensual democracy. Even harsh and honest critics cannot hurt the hypocrisy and lies of manipulated participation. Consensus is, by definition, the method of making criticism ineffective. This is why very little is accomplished today by alternative teaching strategies or innovative ways of pointing out the fallacies of the regime. Situationism has been outpaced by political correctness powered by marketing machines. It is not contradictory for global capital to stand for peace (creating a state of permanent war to guarantee it), sustainability (securing opportunities for environment-friendly businesses and tourism), and multiculturalism (as long as it is clear which bodies are legal in which places and which ones are not). The apparatus of consensus excels at demonstrating that any utopia other than reality is ridiculous. The dictators and absolute monarchs that still exist—for the most part, all good friends of the governments ready to send their air forces to teach lessons of human rights to those who are not their friends—have no tolerance for dissent. Consensus is a more productive way of dealing with opinion. It can absorb different forms of criticism, from Marxism and identity politics to the critical forms of postmodernism and feminism, all of which, in their own ways, still rely on one or another form of linking knowledge to the Subject. Even the relatively recent popularization of the critique of Empire, which sought innovation in the content of critique, in its form has not been able to present an alternative to the logic of pedagogy, as it is still trapped in the notion of a worker-subject (albeit one with enhanced cognition). These critical approaches reproduce the logic of pedagogy. Pedagogy is an outcome of their efficacy. The more effective the critique, the more pedagogical. The more these analyses help identify the interests of a predefined subject, the more they help reproduce the foundations of existing realism.

In this context, the only critique that can succeed is that which produces its own "outside," a subtractive critique. This critique does not add more critical information in
the belief that it might weaken the regime, but rather confronts the presuppositions of knowledge. It aspires to be not one more form of knowledge (which could be included in the consensus) but rather a thought that opens a gap in knowledge and keeps it open as long as it can.

Criticism, Marxist or not, only contributes to "tune up" consensual democracy by pointing out "problems" not yet visible to the apparatuses of consensus. Descriptions of "problems" might be good and useful to the people involved in struggles, but are still separate from their situations. It is impossible to overcome this divorce by pedagogical means, keeping the separation between those who "think" and those who "do."

The question of being is at stake in the definition of the current struggles. The virtue they affirm is twofold: on one hand, it exists as the effective invention of new ways of being, concrete bonds created anew in the situations where day by day unemployed workers, migrants, the destitute, in general, those whose existence has become precarious, invent new ways of being. On the other hand, it affirms virtue by undoing representation. These are de-instituent movements, collections of protagonists held together by the nothingness of war cries whose only affirmation is the declaration of the end of a collective bond: ¡Que se vayan todos! (All of them out!), ¡Ya basta! (Enough!). These movements have discovered the fragility of consensual democracy and against them consensual politicians and policy-makers are at war.

I characterize as antipedagogies the intellectual experiments that seek to accompany this new protagonism, taking sides with its virtue, participating in its lines of flight. In this work I argue that ignorance is the only legitimate compass to guide this antipedagogical enterprise.

I have tried to avoid presenting antipedagogy pedagogically, as a form that develops harmoniously, following a regulated formative path. When possible, I have tried to mobilize my affects as much as my head, and my hope is that my editing of these notes has not cut this attempt short. I am not pursuing the communication of a message from my head to somebody else’s. Rather, I am seeking to establish resonances between my will and those who read this piece. I don’t write this to make a point in favour of fragmentary writing, but rather to state a desire to construct a non-linear plane of speed
and slowness, as Deleuze and Guattari would argue. Time that follows a pedagogical line of development mystifies by making things “clear.”

My thesis begins with the discussion, in Chapter 1, of knowledge and politics as phenomena of different nature. Knowledge represents, discerns, and classifies. It is instrumental in the distribution of functions, roles, identities, classes, and utterances. Politics exists as a disruption of knowledge. It does not need master-liberators who know and can explicate for those in struggle where to go. Knowledge cannot foresee politics and, indeed—not excluding perspectives informed by Marxism, critical theory, and even Foucault, Deleuze and Badiou—has played a major role in securing the end of politics. Politics is autonomous from knowledge and tied to will, to desire. Its dynamic is guided by affects. Politics, like thought, entails ruptures. What politics ruptures is the bond that defines the collective as One and makes it representable. The effect of undoing the bond reaches the entire collective (a nation, for instance), but politics is always local. The multiple subjects of politics are singular (not normal), guided by chance (not knowable), and ephemeral (not substantial). Their consistency is guaranteed only by their potentia, by their affirmation of their power to act here and now. Politics, therefore, requires a subtraction from representation, from knowledge and consensus. Politics is the outcome of struggles that fall outside pedagogy, that create new values and collective bonds. Instead of taking the perspective of the enlightened pedagogue, it takes a position of ignorance. Antipedagogy recognizes that it does not know for sure what politics is. It seeks ways of expanding the power to act, and is concerned with will, desire, affect, and thought.

Gilles Deleuze distinguished between, on one hand, the classic theory of natural law, which presupposes the achievement of a "good" society, in which reason is identified with the state at the same time as the collective bond the state represents becomes the synonym of universality. This path inevitably foregrounds the authority of the intellectuals, bearers of the universal and therefore liberators. On the other hand, there is a conception in which the state of nature can never be completely suppressed, in which reason enjoys no privilege over the body, potentia exists in action (and is nothing beyond action), and the judgment of intellectuals enjoys no privilege. To the former perspective corresponds a moral vision of the world, to the latter an ethical vision. There is a moral
vision of liberation, tied to the achievement of the good society, or at least of a society that is better than the one we live in. In such a society, police, that is, the perspective of the state on administrating life towards its improvement, replaces politics, the struggle for freedom and justice. In consensual democracies, representation, knowledge and communication reign supreme because a diffuse and intense pedagogization is necessary to explicate the collective bond and individual difference, the whole and the parts, universality and particularity. The everyday regulation of life by police is inconceivable outside an ongoing recreation of the relation between people of knowledge and the ignorant.

In Chapter 2 I look at pedagogy as the articulation of intellectuals and emancipation in education. Modern education appears as a natural system for ordering the tasks of those who think for the rest and the unenlightened, whose ignorance engenders the position of the former. The diffusion of knowledge ties individual and collective progress, the promise of an enlightened—and therefore more just—future society if action is taken to eliminate, or at least reduce, the inequality of intelligence. But no pedagogue can undo inequalities because they are the result of an extensive point of view for which differences of intelligences are obvious. Liberation through pedagogy is a paradox because the same agent creates the inequality it seeks to undo.

But education is also an interesting place to find examples of antipedagogy. Nineteenth century French educator Joseph Jacotot argued that all intelligences are equal, what is different is the intensity of will of each person. In this ethical view, the will commands over intelligence. While pedagogy assumes that intelligence is a sovereign faculty, the premise of antipedagogy is that the will can be sovereign and that emancipation is the project of liberating the will. The premise that intelligences are sovereign—the foundation of rational choice—leads pedagogy to come up with forms of better communication between intelligences. This, Jacotot argued, inevitably results in stultification, the impairment of the will. The more knowledgeable the pedagogue, the more s/he blocks the growth of the autonomous will. Because its starting point is an ethical conception of social change, and not the moral vision of an emancipated society, antipedagogy pursues the conquest of his or her will by each person, working on the adequate ideas and composition of affects that make this possible.
Alongside the pedagogy of the citizen-subject that conceives emancipation through education, there has been, since the early twentieth century, a pedagogy that pursues emancipation by producing the encounter of a worker-subject with its imputed consciousness. In its canonical form, this pedagogy raised the question "what is politics?" and refused to assimilate it with police. But, when it came to advancing a politics, it appointed a collective pedagogue: the Party. The pedagogy of consciousness answered the question "where is politics?" not much unlike the pedagogy of the citizen: politics requires seizing the state. The pedagogy of consciousness, which I investigate in Chapter 3, assumes that critical thought is superior in its content to common sense and that thinking is an activity of the head. It shares, with the pedagogy of the citizen, the notion of the hierarchy of mind over body and the conception of individual free will. Taking power presupposes a symmetrical dialectic and a vanguard capable of securing the consistency of the antagonistic camp. In contrast, an ethics of social change looks more like the storming of the Bastille after the revolution has already taken place than like the storming of the Winter Palace to force changes from above. The attempt to overcome the pedagogy of consciousness and the predefined subject through intersubjective communicative action misses the point that consensus has established a fixed structure that is perfectly compatible with the circulation of opinions. Democracy is not the exchange of discourse but the modification of the regime that makes utterances possible. On the other hand, the assumption that the subject is the working class is not necessarily incompatible with postmodern cultural relativism, the celebration of particular identities and the reign of the isolated fragment. Consensual democracy has nothing to lose with multiculturalism.

It is in this context that rising new protagonism in Argentina, Bolivia, and other places asked again the questions about the nature and location of politics. Antipedagogues have found inspiration in such instances of the real movement to realize that common sense is neither superior nor inferior to knowledge and that thinking is not an activity of the mind but of the entire body. In politics everybody thinks. The question is not to change consciousness, but to change life. The pedagogy of consciousness and consensual democracy coincide in treating the state as the centre of political activity. Both already
know what politics is, whose action is political and whose is not. The ethical question that antipedagogy seeks to address, on the other hand, is the production of another sociality.

Politics dissolves the collective bond. It involves the activity of the many as many, that is, of a multitude. The multitude, as I consider it in Chapter 4, is not a subject but rather a category that defines both the condition of possibility and the result of singular acts of subjectification. In this sense, the strength of the category of the multitude is its power to describe the many as many. This capacity is compromised in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s conception of the multitude, in which a labour theory of the subject operates as an organizing centre. In this conception, the multitude represents the symmetrical opposite of Empire, the latest form of capitalist domination. This symmetric model demands a pre-eminence of the features that make the multitude global, among them the component that produces the links that hold the multitude together. Hence the centrality of the labour that produces immaterial commodities, knowledge, and communication. Immaterial labour, the sector of the working class that produces immaterial commodities, is the pedagogical core of this conception of the multitude. Unlike the predefined subject of the pedagogy of consciousness, immaterial labour already incarnates its true interests. An immanent pedagogue is incarnated in those who are workers and intellectuals, producers and reproducers of the substance that brings together politics and production: biopower. Yet, when the source of the alternative is biopower itself, politics loses its specificity. Following the thread of the politics of automation, Italian *operaismo* has arrived at the conception of the automation of politics.

An ethical concept of the multitude is a description of the politics of the many as many that does not depend on an explicit communication network nor does it have immaterial labour at its centre. Labour remains a central problem in capitalism, not a central situation. Considered in this way, what the multitude affirms are heterogeneous, eccentric and diffusely coordinated points of a politics in which everybody thinks. Each point is a singularity, a minority, a subtraction from the global that is still universal, and an affirmation of life beyond biopolitical survival.

How can intellectuals who feel the urge of politics approach movements defined by their protagonism and refusal of representation; movements whose priority is the expansion of the power to act in the situation, not the construction of global alternatives?
How can a practice of ignorance be articulated to find the trace of potentia? Militant research has built an antipedagogy that seeks to create common notions, a process that involves not so much consciousness as it does affects. In Chapter 5 I introduce Situaciones, a collective of militant researchers from Argentina that has sought forms of antipedagogical intervention while inhabiting the new protagonism that successfully battled against the neoliberal realism of the 1990s. Where academic and party pedagogies no longer had anything to contribute, militant research added its effort by taking sides with the new protagonism while maintaining a fidelity to those who embodied the revolutionary struggles of the past. The path is hard to walk when the people whose business is to think are more prone to find delight in the complexity of their own arguments than to ponder the political consequences of thinking in their situation and when those still committed to emancipation, even against the deafening murmur of common sense, refuse to entertain the consequences of thinking.

Thinking with the body, through affect, overcoming the scholarly sanitation of experience and the activist morality that all too often resolves politics through pronouncements of support of this or that struggle, Colectivo Situaciones continues to elaborate an antipedagogy whose ongoing question is to follow the trail of potentia. Militant researchers cannot afford to put away what passes through their bodies to construct objects and produce texts. Theirs is research without an object that produces nomad knowledge published without the aim of communicating anything. At all costs, antipedagogy should avoid idealizations, that is, taking for real whatever separates it from the immanence of the act, from the experience of the multiple that arises when there is a real encounter with others. The point is to find a politics that can match the exigencies of life, forming relations with groups not sustained on the validity of their explications but on love and friendship. The antipedagogy of research militancy is a craft, a patiently acquired ignorance whose affects are tuned up to establish resonances with the weapons for liberation that are born from the intelligence of the oppressed.
Chapter One
From Knowledge to Thought: Pedagogy and Antipedagogy

Three Manifestos

Not only did the dream of liberation organized by vanguards collapse in 1989. The next decade marked the end of the forms of revolution and communism that characterized the twentieth century and the beginning of capitalist globalization dotted by local instances of passionless consensual democracy. But, the decade was revolutionary in a paradoxical sense. The end of that revolution was also the liberation of practices of emancipation. The decade saw the rise of forms of resistance that no longer look for meaning in the central representation of a state they seek to seize, in a utopian society always slipping away into the future; or in those who know how to get from here to there.

For some time, a hidden, almost silent, debate had been taking place. Its participants, very few and scattered, seemed to fit nowhere. Nor did they recognize themselves in any of the existing forms of political critique and practice. They were pieces of an impossible puzzle, making vows of political faith to events that, for those standing within the state paradigm, did not add up to a politics. Claiming that a new politics had to be invented, they acknowledged the epochal change, but they also thought that the militant commitment of those who had struggled for revolution in the past did not have to be abandoned. Such a politics would have to go through the minefield of realist positions adopted by numerous former leftists and beyond the metaphysics of determinism and representation pervasive in most of what remained of Marxism.

New inquiries on the notion of liberation were being forged; thoughts and practices that questioned the prevailing idea that liberty and justice were points of arrival, features of a utopian society that, from a future that never arrives, normalize actions in the present. It was necessary to dismiss utilitarian morality: the notion that the ignorance of the interests of the community is what keeps the subject from becoming active.

In Argentina, Raúl Cerdeiras and a group of friends began to meet in the late eighties to discuss a politics that could escape the false alternatives being offered within the available representative democracy. In 1991, Cerdeiras and his friends launched the
journal *Acontecimiento* (Event), a publication of limited distribution, extremely limited finances, and austere appearance, which grew, like many other similar experiments in the years to come, on the margins of both the academic left and the mainstream Marxist party militancy. Cerdeiras's group gathered a collection of people with varied experience, including survivors of the revolutionary armed groups of the 1960s and '70s, former Trotskyists, former members the Communist Party, and activists of the student movement and human rights groups.

The manifesto that opens the first issue of *Acontecimiento* claims that its purpose is neither to produce a new interpretation nor to fill a void. Its project is a wager that steps outside politically sterile Marxist rhetoric. The subtitle of the journal is *A Magazine to Think Politics*. The author argues that only in this way—that is, not starting from the presupposition that somebody knows what is to be done—is it possible to enact the subversion entailed in thinking politics. Politics, in this conception, has a very limited meaning. It applies only to thinking-doing that ruptures the collective bond of domination. Emancipation only results from the destruction of the existing collective bond, “anything short of that is administration and management of that bond” (Cerdeiras, “Manifiesto Político” 38).

Politics, as a capacity to subvert the bond that unites the community, does not depend on an analysis of reality. Any struggle whose premises start from research on the existing situation is inevitably part of such situation. History cannot be severed from necessity if political decisions are based on what can be known about the economic infrastructure or about the conjunctural articulations of traditional political forces. Lacking instances that conceived politics as rupture, the decade that ended in 1989 had been a time without politics.

Such a conception of politics is not yet another attempt to re-think Marxism. The *Acontecimiento* manifesto acknowledged that Marxism, in the trajectory that goes from Marx, to Lenin, to Mao, is the last of the great political inventions, but is also an avenue closed for good. Marxism is dead and its defense is “sterile, repetitive, and dogmatic.” Marxism has nothing substantially new to add to a new politics of emancipation. And yet, “Marx’s thought constituted the most extraordinary political event of the last century and a half” (“Manifiesto Político,” 79). Marxism is the only possible place from where to undertake a subversion of politics, which, necessarily, includes the destruction of
Marxism. Marxism is dead de facto; it also needs to die de jure. This task involves the demolition of the metaphysics of the subject. There is an affinity between this demolition and “the currents of thought that seek to deactivate the category of the subject such as it was constructed in the tradition of Western philosophy, at least from Descartes to our days” (79). The destruction of the notion of the subject is a task to which a number of thinkers have contributed, from Spinoza, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Cantor, through Lacan, Althusser, Foucault and Deleuze, to, currently, Rancière and Badiou. There is also no doubt that a certain Marx has to be added to the list. This Marx is a militant enemy of the metaphysics of the other Marx. This Marx is the young man who vibrantly proclaimed the need of a new materialism in the “Theses on Feuerbach.” This Marx also includes the old man who systematically avoided the publication of the last volumes of Capital in a failed attempt to stop the formation of Marxism. The dissolution of the metaphysics of the subject entails the withering of a necessary relation between politics and knowledge (Rancière, Philosopher 116, 239).

Since its creation, the editors of Acontecimiento had had a close relation to French philosopher and militant Alain Badiou. Later they came in touch with Miguel Benasayag, a member along with Badiou of Malgré Tout, a militant collective based in Paris working with the sans papiers, the illegal immigrants in France. The two groups began a close relationship that materialized in the formation of the joint collective A pesar de todo, an experiment that lasted until 1997, once the constituting premises of this larger collective had been exhausted (Cerletti, “Presentación”).

The Zapatista revolt rocked the Mexican state of Chiapas and the world on January 1st, 1994, raising the stakes of the debate on a new politics. In Buenos Aires and Paris, the militants of A pesar de todo were following the events closely. In 1995 the Malgré Tout collective published its manifesto.

More than a set of principles for action, the dense prose of the manifesto intends to introduce a new politics in open polemic with, on one hand, the mainstream Marxist currents and, on the other, postmodernists, the nouveau philosophes, other deserters from the left, and liberal common sense. Malgré Tout argues that liberation is a politics of the act; it involves thinking in and for the situation. Freedom is not a state to be reached, because such an orientation of thought necessarily summons to the scene the figure of the
master liberator, the peddler of future happiness in exchange for present submission. “It is not by instituting new ways of living that we can be free, but rather it is by acting freely that we can invent new forms of life” (58).

According to Malgré Tout, Francis Fukuyama and some apologists of the coming of a new postmodern era were right in their claim that history had ended. Messianic time was over, but what has gone with it is not just the parousia of a communist state, but also the myth of progress so dearly embraced by communist defectors. Freedom is not a state, the manifesto argued, but the struggle for liberation here and now. Only within the concrete parameters of restricted action is it possible to talk about emancipation. The “heres” and “nows” are endlessly repeated—history never ends. Politics is restricted action, action that breaks free from the certainties granted by knowledge. No knowledge can anticipate the future: there are neither laws of history nor lessons we can draw from the past that can help anticipate the consequences of action. Politics as restricted action is a “wager without guarantees on the rupture of the situation” (59). The justification of vanguards is historical determination and the establishment of that which is possible. Since Lenin, their existence has been the answer to his question what is to be done?

The role of intellectuals as vanguards—from communist parties, to postmodern nihilists, to former socialists converted to the realpolitik of consensus—is to evaluate what is convenient to do. Such vanguards are the secular successors of Providence—from the Latin pro vedere (to look ahead)—after the death of God. Looking ahead properly requires a global vision of the world. That world, Malgré Tout argues, is a construction that “has no existence outside the discursive presuppositions that constitute it” (62). The global vision presupposes individual spectators destined to consume information and commodities. The world as spectacle removes people from where they can really act—their situation. The world and the situation exclude each other as much as the spectator and the political subject do. Action in and for the situation removes politics from the logic of means and ends that justifies the existence of vanguards.

To do away with the world as a single situation is to leave behind a well-seasoned Marxist tradition: the belief that the capitalist mode of production can explain all forms of domination. If there is not a global vision of the world, there are no global visions of struggle either. The preeminence of class struggle belongs to a global vision.
To declare the end of the world as a spectacular single situation need not plunge us into a horizon of relativism, in which the notion that “everything is political” makes sense. Rather, politics has a clear and narrow definition: it is that which “questions the structure of the situation” (66). It is therefore not expected by the common sense of the situation. In consequence, given the fact that it escapes knowledge, true political action is non-negotiable—there is no conceivable solution for that which politics affirms “from the point of view of the administration of the situation” (68). The political subject is always constituted in a becoming-minority, always fleeing from the position of the majority.

Politics, for Malgrè Tout, should not be confused with the businesses of the state, even the state broadly defined as the common sense or the norm of each situation. Power (pouvoir) and power (pouissance) exclude each other.

In Argentina, the pressure of the rising unemployed workers movement—known as piqueteros—had been mounting for over three years when Malgrè Tout met in Buenos Aires in 1999 with several other similar collectives from France, Argentina, Perú and Bolivia to create the Red de Resistencia Alternativa (Network of Alternative Resistance). At the meeting they launched a manifesto which features the argument that the key to an emancipatory politics is to liberate power, as “pouissance,” completely from its association with the sense of power as “pouvoir.” Politics is exclusively on the side of potentia. The immediate task is, then, to resist all that diminishes potentia and to create concrete bonds that would make it flourish. Thus, resistance is “the creation, here and now, of bonds and forms of organization that can launch movements, groups and people” into a struggle to defend life and overcome capitalism. For capitalism manifests itself as different forms of separation of life from itself: intellectual and manual labour, mind and body, those who think and those who do (227). Separation is the source of sadness, of the loss of potentia that justifies the existence of tyrants. There is separation in the constitution of each of us as isolated individuals. Such is the foundation of all the ongoing mobilization of fear and insecurity. All labels—all identities—homogenize people and separate them from their multiplicity. There is separation in the administrative conception of power that aspires to colonize all possible politics.

The political task is to liberate potentia, which can only happen by producing new bonds and opening the multiple dimensions of “desire, imagination, and creation” where
capitalism could only offer a one-dimensional life (228). To liberate potentia it is fundamental not to share desires with the masters. Only slaves do that. The politics of potentia is inseparable from the creation of new practices and images of happiness.

Written between the deadlock of revolutionary thought and practice of the early 1990s and the perception that a recomposition of anticapitalist struggles was under way at the end of the decade, the three manifestos raise a burning question: what modes of involvement can intellectuals pursue that acknowledge not only the defeat of the intellectual as a pedagogical figure, but also the rise of forms of political action that incorporate principles such as decentralized organization, horizontal decision-making, and a decision to change the world without seizing state power. While still using the work of Marx and some Marxists as a valuable toolbox, the groups signing these manifestos do not aspire their thought to be judged in terms of their fidelity to Marxism. Their fundamental fidelity to Marx is expressed in their commitment to the communist struggle for freedom and justice, whatever form it takes in each situation. In times of rampant capitalist serialization and bureaucratic cooptation, these manifestos echo the defiant thesis Marx pronounced when calling for the invention of forms of involvement different from those the bourgeoisie expected from the intellectuals it nurtured: “philosophers have only interpreted the world, in different ways; the point is to change it.”

**Marx Beyond Metaphysics**

The old materialism criticized by Marx in the “Theses on Feuerbach” conceives social change in the form of education. It is concerned with “changing circumstances and upbringing,” forgetting “that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself.” The old materialist conception cannot but divide “society into two parts, one of which is superior to society” (“Concerning Feuerbach” 422). In opposition to this vision of change, Marx presents a new materialism for which changing circumstances is possible only through a revolutionary practice that refuses any claim to be above society and refuses, therefore, the possible existence of a position from where to educate people into their own liberation.

Ludwig Feuerbach was, for the young Marx, the most refined example of a breed of intellectuals confident that emancipation is the outcome of exposure to demystifying critiques, a position inevitably trapped, as Jacques Rancière suggests, “within the horizon
of impotent contemplation and interminable education" (Philosopher 132). Marx’s new materialism affirms that knowledge and politics are irreconciliable. It is not possible to build a bridge over that gap.

Interpreting the world and changing it are two different ways of conceiving thought. I argue that Marx’s thesis is that philosophers who interpret the world do not change it, at least as a consequence of their interpretations, regardless how insightful the knowledge and how well it is received by the audience. Changing the world is the interruption of contemplation. Between spectatorship and action that changes the world there is rupture and discontinuity. Politics involves a decision that is not the outcome of insightful contemplation.

For the old materialism, politics follows the model of health. The sick person does not know how to overcome his or her disease; the physician has the knowledge that can lead the patient to the cure. Knowledge and power come together under Pasteur’s dictum: “if you suffer, you belong to me” (qtd. in Benasayag, Pensar la Libertad 80). The doctor observes and prescribes; the patient acts following the advice. Marx’s new materialism abandons the model of health to embrace justice as a model; not the rights and duties of the judiciary apparatus, which in the end is another form of the health model, but a justice in actu, the confirmation of equality here and now that launches people into struggle.

Knowledge, for the old materialism, is a meaning-giving process in which the subject and the object are separated by the act of contemplation that creates an “objective reality.” Since Plato contemplative philosophers have produced objects by wiping out whatever disturbs their pure image. Thus, a worker appears to be somebody who does only one thing at a time: work. Objectification idealizes by reducing the reality of the living. It turns a worker into a member of the working class, a person who studies into a student, a man into a man, and a woman into a woman. But a woman, for instance, will always be more than any particular example of the human female. There is no tautology in representation, only reduction of reality: “A woman is not a ‘model’ anything. She is not even a distinct and definite personality.... A woman is a strange soft vibration in the air, going forth unknown and unconscious, and seeking a vibration of response.... And a man the same” (D.H. Lawrence qtd. in Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus 351). Old materialist interpretation forces the multiplicity of the concrete to adjust to the abstraction
of representation. The multiple dimensions of thought and action as they exist in practice are transformed into knowledge. Old materialism is a form of idealism that separates the object from what it is capable of.

Marx believed that the truth in politics is decided in practice and cannot be determined in the knowledge of an object by a subject. Theory is an instance of knowledge, but not of truth: "the dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question" (Marx, "On Feuerbach" 422). There is no truth in the thought that takes place separated from practice. The truth produced by a subject observing an object and conferring meanings to it lacks political value. Truth can be decided by practice only because those involved in practice are already thinking.

Both Feuerbach and Marx condemned the illusions that originate in the alienation of daily life. But the critique of illusions does not operate the same way for those who only interpret the world and for those engaged in its revolutionary transformation. The humanist materialism of Feuerbach has roots in the battle of the nascent capitalist bourgeoisie against monarchical rule (Rancière, Althusser 26). Its secular standpoint undermines the notion that history is the work of God. It places instead "man" as the subject of history. But the notion of humanity it relies upon is defined by nature. The subject of history conceived by the old materialists is humanity defined by the capacity of men (and, eventually, also women) to interpret sensuous data. Rational man is a knowing subject, who accumulates knowledge, describes the world, and remains a spectator.

Marx's Theses do not replace this subject with another. Rather than a subject, they refer to the empirical, sensuous activity of men and women who clash against the status quo in revolutionary struggles. In politics there is no natural hierarchy of reason. Positions of leadership are sediments of past class struggles. Those who do not occupy the pinnacle are as capable of thinking as anyone else.

The empirical subjects of social life are not isolated individuals, particular spectators gathered under the "dumb generality" of human essence (Marx, "Concerning Feuerbach" 423). The private individual is an abstraction and so is its aggregation in the notion of civil society. Abstractions dissipate as one abandons the contemplative point of
view to embrace the only way in which thinking can unleash its reality and power: in practice; a practice that, insofar as it changes the world, is already thinking.

Marxists have long debated the conditions under which this thinking happens and the camera obscurae whose inverted images distort the orientation of the history made by empirical men and women. Many have concluded that making history is too difficult a problem to be taken on by ordinary people. It requires the competence and intervention of those most capable of comprehending history, who, grouped in the state, the Party, academic institutions, think tanks, or NGOs can provide the adequate instruction and vision to the masses so that they can make the kind of history that best suits their objective interests.

Against this view is a Marx who is skeptical about subjects of history and representation. This Marx advances the vivid notion that history is the work of the mass intelligence of the multitudes—history made by peoples without name, which does not march toward progress and has no permanent subject. For, while contemplative philosophers interpret the world, and for this very reason feel entitled to advise others on what is to be done, the point is not to be a spectator of the world, but to change it. The world ought to be changed by the implicit subject that carries out a social life that is essentially practical, a mass intelligence deployed in the struggle against oppression that does not need the pious interpretations of men and women of knowledge—it only requires our rebellion. As Rancière points out, Marx stated, in the “Theses on Feuerbach,” a threat that hangs over the heads of professional thinkers: “the time of philosophers and philanthropers, of benevolent reformers and interpreters of the world has passed; … it is now the time of a new intelligence that is not the one of the learned” (Althusser 35-6).

Idealism and the old materialism share the same ontological terrain. Marx’s wager was to found a new materialism that differs as radically from interpreting it. The intelligence mobilized in changing the world has the immanence of practical activity. Its communism will never be a “state of affairs” and will always remain “the real movement which abolishes the present state of things” (Marx and Engels, The German Ideology 57). This movement, in its actual existence, is what undoes the illusory collective bonds produced by both religion and “that world whose spiritual aroma is
religion,” which includes politics and the state (Marx “Introduction…” 244). Marx’s attack on religion was aimed at its most directly etymological sense: it is a critique of its function as transcendent re-linking ( religare) of individuals in a sphere external to concrete practices. Social representations re-link because, at some point in their creation, they become autonomous, objectified abstractions that acquire a moral force on the men and women who produced them. Abstractions result from a process of idealization, but are not, for that reason, less real than the people who produce them.

In undoing the consistency of the collective bond, Marx realized that there is no rival to the deterritorialization and fragmentation of life that results from money as universal equivalent and from the colonization of life by the commodity form. By always making more universal the reach of what can be subjected to market exchange, capital will profane anything that remains holy. Capitalism is revolutionary because, aside from the solid things it can melt into air, it is capable of drowning “the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation” (Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto 82). Nothing held sacred will stop capital in this drive. But in its universalizing path capital establishes private property and money as its own mythical forms.

As it tears into pieces traditional representations, capitalism produces a paradoxical result. The demolition of identities alienates persons from one another, rupturing sociality and established forms of mutual recognition, replacing them with money relations and fragmenting in the process collective bonds to produce isolated and self-interested individuals. The formal equalization imposed by the rule of the market flattens concrete situations and turns the entire world into a single sphere of experience. As Debord puts it, everything directly experienced recedes into the representation of the world as spectacle (The Society of the Spectacle 1). The universal equivalence established by exchange value is the point in which everything can be compared to everything else; the commodity achieves the transparency of the world and the world becomes communicable with itself through the commodity.

The result is nihilism: the fullness of identity disappears into nothingness. The individual that results from capitalist modernity is a spectator just like the contemplative philosopher is before the world. In the order that ensues, individuals participate “in
political life only in a sophistical way” (Marx, “On the Jewish Question” 220). They observe and emit opinions. In the conception of emancipation of the old materialists, individuals listen to the opinions of contemplative philosophers to cast their own in the press or in the ballot box. All the freedom the individual enjoys is exhausted within a more or less determinable set of available choices and roles.

Marx’s new materialist perspective built upon the irreversible dethronement of representations by capitalism recognized that nihilism numbs the desire to change the world. It orients its effort to the suspension of the abstract collective bonds that produce individuals as isolated monads. It does not go back to metaphysical bonds, such as God, the state or the nation, nor does it engage in a relativist celebration of the death of all bonds. Rather, the new materialism focuses on the sociability that expands immanent bonds. The political emancipation of the individual citizen “is not, indeed, the final form of human emancipation, but it is the final form of human emancipation within the framework of the prevailing social order.” The new materialism seeks a “real, practical emancipation” (“On the Jewish Question” 221). Because, in a materialist sense, freedom has to do with a practice that pierces through the consistency of the individual as a nihilist spectator, its achievement falls beyond the possibilities of the contemplative thinker and the society of spectators she contemplates.

There is, however, another Marx, no longer a thinker of multiplicity but a philosopher of identities whose concessions to representation have been celebrated by aspiring heirs and detractors alike. This angle of Marx is most visible, as Rancière suggests, when he gives priority to the historical dialectic over the empirical materiality of lived relations (Philosopher 101). Marxism became more openly metaphysical as the result of selective readings that looked into Marx’s œuvre for elements to support a conception of politics as confrontation of classes.

In Marx’s pastoral phrasing, communism is the moment when the same person hunts in the morning, fishes in the afternoon, rears cattle in the evening, and criticises after dinner “without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic” (German Ideology 53). Changing the world is the dissolution of the determinism of functions that fasten the hunter, the fisherman, the shepherd, and the critical critic to their place, the worldview that creates abstract collectivities by supposing their members do one thing at
a time. But when he thinks in the prosaic language of means and relations of production, Marx draws an itinerary to communism that takes a long detour through machinery and large-scale industry in the bourgeois factory. Workers can aspire to communist non-identity only by relinquishing the full control of their trade and demystifying the illusions that prevent them from seeing themselves as men and women of needs. Specialization in always more fragmented tasks and the sacrifice of creative leisure in the present are the price to pay to one day become full persons, no longer segregated by the line that divides manual from mental labour.

The workers of Marx, the dialectician, must sacrifice a life of leisure, which they or their descendents will recover later, by being now on the side of machines and by occupying their designated position in the struggle of contraries. The historical dialectics whose moment of synthesis is communism requires a confrontation between communities defined by substantive features. Workers acquire their distinctive identity as subjects of a society whose essence is production. Production transforms everything and everything is the result of a chain of transformations whose foundation is the activity of workers. The essential truth of this world is not readable by everybody because, along with commodities, workers produce fetishized ideas about them. Scientists, who are outside the working class but are not entirely part of the bourgeoisie, would eventually join proletarians in their struggle and help them comprehend the complexities that the camera obscura of bourgeois society prevents them from seeing. The worker, as a figure of substantial identity, as the subject of whose essence is production, is at odds with the empirical workers who desire to be something different from workers.

The premise of the dialectics of the metaphysical Marx is a knowable totality, a One that divides into Two. In the Manifesto the proletariat is the double of the bourgeoisie. The bloody repression of workers in June 1848 by an army manned by workers shattered into pieces the clean readability of history as a confrontation between bourgeois and proletarians. Classes ceased to appear transparent. The homogeneity required for a precise dialectical analysis proved to be volatile in the face of history. In trying to hold on to his first intuitions, Marx found it necessary to recognize the inconsistency of the proletariat. As Rancière suggests, it was at this moment when Marx used the concept of lumpenproletariat, turning to the existing bourgeois mythology about
the infirmity of robbers, thieves, and prostitutes, to give sociological consistency to the working class (Philosopher 95-7). The lumpen are members of the class who forget the revolutionary interests that hold together the class as One. The bourgeoisie as a class is equally unable to live up to an ideal consistency. When Marx considered classes as dialectically confronting each other, he was forced to portray them with a consistency that did not hold when the real forces at play at a given time and place came into consideration.

Rancière argues forcefully that the “materialist” Marx remained ambiguous about the proletariat. In its Ancient Roman genealogy, the term ‘proletarian’ does not refer to workers but to the dispossessed, those who have nothing but still are part of society—they are both being and nonbeing (Philosopher 80). It is because they have lost every attribute, and not because they are agents of production, that proletarians may become subjects. The proletariat, in this sense, is pure multiplicity without consistency; it is revolutionary insofar as it is a non-class. Communism is the struggle of the proletariat, not of the working class. It entails the abandonment of the standpoint of identity by embracing the multiplicity that dissolves it (Rancière, Philosopher 81). Rancière argues that there is no materialist analysis of classes in Marx—only dialectics accounts for classes. For the materialist perspective, identities are in perpetual flight. Practice—the multiplicity of life in which everybody is always becoming someone else—is essentially a realm of non-identity. If there is not a proletarian identity, if there is not a working class outside its sociological use, then it is pointless to find ways to make proletarians aware of their true interests. In this sense it is necessary to reassess the point of Marx’s critique of capital in Capital, which “is not, as good souls believe, a matter of simple devotion to produce the science destined to arm the proletariat with knowledge of the ‘objective conditions’ of their struggle. The proletariat does not need the science of capital to become educated. It needs it to exist” (Rancière, Philosopher 113). It needs it, in other words, to name those who are counted as members of capitalist society, but whose inclusion is coded in terms of the only commodity they can trade—labour power.

The eleventh thesis on Feuerbach has many times received a moral interpretation, as a positive judgement on the practice of activists and a dismissal of armchair intellectuals. But what is at stake in the new materialism is precisely the weakening of the
moral foundation of the world. Instead of being a value judgement, the thesis states the separation between a moral and an ethical vision.

**Knowledge and the Singularity of Politics**

In the left, during most of the twentieth century, revolutionary politics has been inseparable from the idea of the revolutionary party. The party was the collective intellectual that, seeking to represent the masses before the state, ended, after a successful revolution, representing the state before the masses. If this is evident in the case of parties from the former USSR to China, it is no less true for reformist parties and their subordination of politics to economics. More than political organizations, parties have been state organizations. It is in the name of economic realism that parliamentary parties have been arguing for the past decades that a revolutionary transformation is no longer possible. Recent events, such as the Zapatista insurrection or the Argentinean revolt of 2001-03, have shown that, while a certain form of revolutionary politics is alive and kicking, the idea of the vanguard party hardly breathes the airs of revolution without life support.

The idea of a vanguard party presupposes that the real movement cannot, without the mediation of intellectuals, act like the subject it already is. The crisis of the party is the crisis of the notion that, in order to become subject, the masses depend on an external figure that thinks on their behalf. The crisis extends to the notion that politics must be thought from outside, that intelligence is alien to the multitude and that it has to be injected into it by sages, even if they are not organized in a party.

Indeed, what the crisis reveals is that politics and knowledge belong to two absolutely separate dimensions. Politics is indiscernible for knowledge. It is not known even by its subject. If politics is known, it ceases to be politics and becomes administration, an act of mere management. Politics can survive the crisis of the dependence on master-liberators and remain revolutionary if we reserve the term “politics” only for those acts of radical creation that are not foreseen by knowledge and undo the logic of the existing order of things, bodies, and words.

Today, as the avenues travelled by politics in the twentieth century have been shut down by the dictatorship of economics, to ask the question “what is politics” has become an inseparable component of politics itself. During the 1980s and for much of the 1990s
we were repeatedly told that the time of politics has ended. What used to be politics had turned into the administration of businesses and the management of populations in accordance to those businesses’ needs.

What is politics without the mediation of master-liberators who know where action is going and who teach others which action is political and which is not? Is there politics in the sapient determination of the interests of a part of society; in the discernment of what is going on and what is to be done? The word “party” here stands not only for those institutions that represent sectors of public opinion in elections (liberals, conservatives, communists, socialists). I am using party in Badiou’s sense of mediation by master-liberators, which extends the concept to other entities entitled to represent parts of society, such as unions and NGOs (Badiou, “Movimiento social” 38).

The philosophical tradition for which knowledge and politics belong to the same dimension conflates universality with totality. All classical metaphysics, including the communist eschatologies of the twentieth century, fit within this logic of transcendence for which the whole is One and multiplicity is a derivate (Badiou, Being and Event 284). This amounts to saying that there is only one single, general situation within which all the other situations fit. The part is deduced from the whole. The notion of the multiple conceivable within this ontology is a pluralism of parts. In the dialectical Marx, as we saw above, concepts such as class or the individual need to be defined in relation to the totality: the social individual or the working class as the antagonist of the bourgeoisie. The whole is One and the multiple is a collection of ones. Instead of conceiving each element as an independent singularity, Marxist methodology—in all its versions, from Marx himself to Althusserianism and Italian operaismo—has used concepts in which relations always depend on “a substance, an essence, a structure,” so that the parts only make sense in relation to the whole (Lazzarato, Políticas del acontecimiento 31). Extant Marxism contributes, in this sense, to block the most interesting avenues of radical pluralist politics.

However, the only real possibility of pluralism appears when multiplicity is not inferred from the One, but rather the multiple is the point of departure and the One is the result. In such an ontology, being is multiple, a multiple of multiples, in which each element is in turn a multiple of multiples. Badiou argues that “the One solely exists as an
"operation" (Being and Event 24). The One is the result of counting a multiplicity as One, freezing it into predictable becomings, inferrable subjectivities, and classifiable conducts. The process of counting as One is implicit in forcing the infinite multiplicity of lived relations into categories of analysis produced by specialists—whether the specialist comes from an academic background or from political activism does not matter in this case. The operation that produces the consistency of the One can be reversed when the element that dissolves the One into multiplicity makes itself present. Badiou calls that element the void. That the bond that holds together society as such is always at risk of being detotalized means that its being One is contingent. An axiom of pluralist politics is that consistency can be rendered inconsistent at any moment, anywhere.

Knowledge is the very act of counting, an operation of inclusion driven to represent all that exists in the situation. But knowledge cannot count the unforeseeable, that which takes place as an event. A political event is something that falls outside the norm that counts as One. Actions of the real movement that are entirely calculated are an expression of the already existing totality and therefore are not political.

In a politics in which there is no mediation of master-liberators two elements are left: the real movement and the state. From the perspective of an ontology of the multiple, the state refers to the socio-historical apparatuses, but also to anything that aims at maintaining the existing distribution of power. The economy is part of the state and so is anything that tells people what group they belong to, which are their places, how they should move, and what trajectories they should follow. The state is that which forbids the alteration of places and the invention of new paths (Badiou, “Movimiento social” 42).

In this sense, the state is the guarantee of consistency of being—the manifestation of the void that Badiou refers to, the constant risk of nothingness that Heidegger places at the origin of anguish and what institutes the care of being (Being and Time 228-35). The ontological function of the state is to prevent the catastrophe of inconsistency (Badiou, Being and Event 93-94). The state is the metastructure that secures the count as One and overcodes identity, sameness, and repetition. It is not, then, a question of abolishing or overcoming the state. The state, in this ontological sense, cannot be abolished (105). There is not, in the horizon of pluralism, an end of the state.
If the state refers, as in the traditional sense, only to administrative and repressive apparatuses, there is always the risk of not revealing the extent of mechanisms of power that penetrate deeply into the heart of the everyday life of individuals and span entire societies. On the one hand, there is very little room for the state today to be more than a local administrator of transnational flows of money, people, and commodities. On the other, the state penetrates increasingly deeper into the microphysical terrain charted by philosophers such as Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. Even the most democratic state metastasizes in a myriad of techniques for the regularization of lives, inscribing quanta of linear temporality on the surface of bodies, and strictly confining chance and innovation to certain spheres of life. The state, in this sense, limits the field of possibilities and secures the assemblage of capacities at the macro level only because it first intervenes on the micro dimension (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 215-7).

The state need not impose rigid limits to prevent the manifestation of the void that reveals the point at which things no longer make sense and the consistency of the One collapses. This void does not manifests itself spontaneously in everyday communication and interaction. Whether in idle conversation, scholarly talk or formulaic popular culture, nothing is really said. Signification is the realm of repetition, the homey feeling of security that quenches anguish and provides containment for the self. (Benasayag, Pensar la libertad 156)

The power of the state is errant and indeterminate—it is nowhere and everywhere. This is the reason why fear is a component of power. Knowledge, Badiou argues, cannot measure the excess of state power (Being and Event 277-80). Only politics can. The belief that knowledge can provide an exact measure of power is at the root of the realist assumption that nothing can be done in politics today outside the rules of consensual democracy. If politics measures the state, it is because it fixes power and makes it possible to calculate a distance from it (Badiou, Metapolitics 145). Politics helps a subject determine what it is capable of: it gives a measurement of its potentia. Thus, a genuine political event interrupts the errancy and fixes the indeterminacy that characterize the normal functioning of the state. Politics is the moment when fear is overcome for the concrete reason that state power, even if big, is now revealed in its true dimension. In this very precise sense politics is liberating: “freedom here consists in putting the state at a
distance through the collective establishment of a measure for its excess” (Badiou, *Metapolitics* 145). Politics is always collective thought. By giving a measure of the power of the state, it affirms a truth that is valid for everyone in the situation. In this sense it is universal. But a terrorist act, for instance, is not a political event because it is unable to stop the errancy of the state. Rather, by being a provocation, it finds an extasis in summoning the indeterminate aspect of the state (Badiou, “Movimiento social” 55).

I am persuaded by Badiou’s argument that politics is indiscernible by the state and the entire range of its knowledge apparatuses. Indeed, politics is subtracted from knowledge and power: it has “the capacity to happen in a different place and not where power is summoning it” (Badiou, “Movimiento social” 58). Politics is singular because it exists outside the time of the market, outside the pace defined by the circulation of both commodities (including the commodity Marx called “labour power”) and information. In its singularity, politics ignores the media, the party, and academia. It is singular in the sense that it defines and protects its own time. Politics is an invention. It creates new places that are not the official places of politics. It invents new trajectories and becomings. These temporalities are not measured against the finalist time of victories and defeats. This time is different from the progressive time of capitalist accumulation, a time without gaps, in which each hole must be sealed. It is different, as well, from the regressive time of postmodernism, a pessimistic time that justifies political realism (nothing can be done outside parliamentary politics and the market). The singularity of invention defines the fidelity of politics to the creative capacity of past struggles for emancipation, more or less in the same way as Andy Warhol was faithful to the early modernism of Monet, even though much of Warhol’s work was a radical innovation.

Politics is singular in the sense that it is not normal. Even though politics is immanent to itself—it thinks itself—it is not immanent in the sense nature is with respect to its own development. There is nothing natural about politics. On the contrary, politics is the irruption of history amidst the natural progress of common sense and the repetition of the status quo.

**Knowledge and the Consensual Closure of the Political Universe**

Politics is singular because it presupposes a subtraction. Whenever politics takes place, it disengages itself from the totality to bring into existence a new world. As a
subtraction, politics is the emergence of the Two, an asymmetrical dialectic between the new world being founded and the point at which the bond that defines the community as One comes apart. The state, in its urge to prevent the manifestation of the void, seeks—sometimes desperately—to turn the subtracted side into a representable body (Badiou, *Being and Event* 207-08). The subtracted part creates; the state is an immanent machine that overcodes, seeks to capture the creation, and channels it through a predictable course.

This desperation reached perhaps textbook clarity in the weeks of ongoing revolt that followed the ousting of president Fernando De la Rua in Argentina in December 2001. Neither the legislative assembly in charge of appointing a successor nor any of the thousand sites that produce meaning and interpretations generally capable of harnessing untamed phenomena could find a way to interpret the obscure “call of the pots and pans” banging in Buenos Aires. The multitude filled the streets and occupied the public squares several times, ousting one president after another for two weeks, but the right interpretative model that could help produce a semblance of representation that some politician could step in to represent was nowhere to be found. The *potentia* of tens of thousands of people occupying the streets was a capacity to say “no” and to open an “indeterminate void” (Lewkowicz 85).

As Ignacio Lewkowicz suggests, a mythology cultivated in academic and political circles affirms that there is a *solution* for everything. Finding it is a matter of looking for the *causes* of the ongoing problem. The nucleus of the myth is the belief that the process that led to the problem can be *reversed* and everything can be again as it was before. A corollary of the myth is that there is *somebody* (individual or group) who *knows* how to solve the problem. The Argentinean fiesta of resistance and creation, which lasted for months, hit at the core of the myth: while nobody could find a “solution” or even clearly state the “problem,” people kept coming together under the war cry “all of them must go.” The essential indetermination was left open. Politicians (from Trotskyists fishing for militants in the neighbourhood assemblies to the political right trying to awaken the ghost of a coup), the media, unions, intellectuals or personalities were all unable to transfer the unrest “to a subject or group that knew what to do” (Lewkowicz 85).

There was no subject who knew about the substance because there was no substance. Politicians can exercise representation only on the condition that the state
counts as One the nation, which is already a count as One of a people, a territory, traditions, cultures, etc. But, in Argentina there was not much to count, only fragments whose *potentia* could be sustained as long as they kept demanding “all of them out.” The capacity for inventing new relations, a new time and new spaces lasted while the plurality of the neighbourhood assemblies, unemployed workers groups, and dozens of experiments of different kinds continued to recognize that there are no solutions. *Potentia* expands on a soil of infinite possibilities and multiple becomings.

The restoration of a subject that knows has had much to do with the closure of this inventive process. The reversal of the opening was a true saddening of politics (Colectivo Situaciones, “Politicizing Sadness”). It took place as the normal relation between knowledge and power could be re-established: as the experts recovered their place as problem-solvers, as the cause-effect relation could be reintroduced in the microphysics of power in daily life.

Depoliticization is inherent in the production of the readability of the subtracted part. It is in this sense, Jacques Rancière suggests, that democracy exists as long as the subtracted part has the power to divide the entire community. The creative power of division lasts while the split side refuses the ranks and identities that correspond to being full members of the community. Democracy, in this sense, involves the power to undo established ranks, identities, and partnerships. A dialogue that exceeds linguistic determinations replaces “dialogue” as a means for unifying and containing dissent.

In this sense, the democracy of politics is a challenge to the One of consensus in today’s liberal democracies. In its current manifestation, consensus is a realist utopia that houses a deep conviction that the society in which goods, bodies, and simulacra can be freely exchanged has entered a homogeneous millenarian time, in which there are no longer political events other than the occasional election, the discovery of a case of corruption, natural catastrophes, and the humanitarian wars needed to bring to the remaining backward societies the enjoyments of elections and limitless economic growth. This true passion for the One is expressed as a call for unity, an urge to amend division.

Consensual democracy understands equality as unification under law and order. It confuses politics with administration—under the sign of the One—of the natural classifications of the parts of society sanctioned by knowledge. Politics is the exercise of
equality in exactly the opposite direction. It summons the power to declassify and replaces unity with division. This power of division and deconstruction retains the materialist meaning of class struggle, a power for which there is no class-in-itself to be respected, no identity to be affirmed unless it inserts a hinge into the unity of the community.

As Rancière suggests, democracy is the capacity of a regime to “make itself unlike itself” (On the Shores 43). Politics is the power to undo the collective bond and create it anew. It is an affirmation of equality that undoes the functions, the established order and values, forcing words such as equality, republic or democracy to have meaning. Class struggle is another name for democracy if it means the refusal to accept an established role by the members of the lower order (students, workers, women, aboriginal peoples in Chiapas or youth of middle-eastern descent living in Paris). It is a refusal that is enacted in the first person, not by elites representing the “victims.” Politics is equality in actu, justice materialized in the actions that make visible the division, proclaiming social ranks unacceptable.

Society is a figure of unity, of the One, and therefore of consent. A society can never be equal, for equality itself would have to become a norm, a form of order, which would be incompatible with equality in actu. Rancière forcefully argues that an equal society is not possible. There are only endless struggles for equality by individuals (On the Shores 82-4). Being multiple, individuals are never equal to themselves. The part of society that subtracts itself as a singularity cannot be well determined and measured, for the same reason that the community imagined—lived, experienced, but indiscernible for knowledge—as a community of equals can never be coextensive with society, which is inherently unequal.

The indiscernibility of politics by knowledge is fundamental for democracy to exist. To preserve the requirement of indiscernibility, the enactment of equality requires a fuzzy count of the part that forces the existence of the two. As Rancière suggests, it is on this imparity that the gap that makes politics and democracy possible is sustained (On the Shores 98). The passion for the One of today’s consensual democracies manifests itself as an effort to undo the indiscernible appearance of focuses of disagreement through the universal exhibition of the real in the media spectacle and through the deployment of the
social sciences as sophisticated apparatuses of representation that eliminate the imparity of the count, precisely define the whole and its parts, and foresee possible disagreements.\footnote{11}

Taking the multiple, and not the one, as the ontological point of departure is a necessary condition for going beyond the blockages of thought at moments when politics is reduced to the administration of market profitability and consensual democracy sets the limits of the possible. Multiplicity is a prerequisite to recognize innovation as the quality of a politics that finds no reference in anything that has been granted existence by knowledge. To be a radical innovation, politics must be outside the grasp of knowledge. Otherwise, if knowledge has the power to name the extent of the possible, it becomes the main support for a realist perspective in which nothing, outside that which it deems possible, can be done.

Never has knowledge been more available to humanity than it is today. As the Franco-Argentine collective A Pesar de Todo pointed out, knowledge is essential “to order, administrate, and govern the existing reality.” (13). Capitalism depends on an extensive research machinery capable of producing qualitative and quantitative information. Because of the vast networks of knowledge there is hardly any aspect of reality that remains hidden. Yet, the greater availability of knowledge on poverty, the environment, repression, the economy, and other aspects of life has not led to a rupture and it never will. Knowledge is necessary to govern, but governance is not politics. It is not possible to make knowledge play on “our side,” even by changing its content to make it more “progressive” because knowledge is always on one side and is always a measure of the possible. Politics, however, is a rupture that, from the perspective of knowledge, is impossible.

Why is a politics based in knowledge always a politics of domination? The reason for this, Badiou argues, is that “knowledge is most simply defined as the linguistic determination of the general system of connections between presentation and representation” (“Números” 17). Knowledge has a normalizing function because it seeks to eliminate the singular by giving it representation, establishing the norm of that which is admissible as reality.
Knowledge is, indeed, infinite. It can certainly know multiplicity. But multiplicity always appears to it as data. It is out there, natural. And in nature there are no events, no ruptures, only facts. Ruptures, on the other hand, are, by definition, the stuff of history. The kind of multiplicity sought by knowledge is not pure multiplicity, but rather the multiplicity of a pre-defined—and usually unacknowledged—totality. Consequently, the infinity represented by knowledge is, in fact, an infinite repetition of finitude. As Badiou notes, the One appears as ontologically immanent and the infinite as only an infinity of ones (Being and Event 163-64).

This phenomenon was visible in the sectarianism of identity politics in the 1980s and 1990s and its fascination with substantial definitions of communities of victims: women, peoples of colour, the poor, etc., which come under attention not as concrete groups capable of an unrecognizable rupture, but rather “in themselves,” named as possessors of an inherent politicity (Badiou, “Números” 27). The postmodern discourse on the fall of grand narratives and the new heterogeneity it presupposes does not eliminate the perspective of the One. It only makes room for the coexistence of multiple forms of the One. It affirms the tumultuous differences within capitalism and calls it “democracy.” It mistakes democracy for a bazaar, the interplay of an “infinite variety of ‘selfish’ individual uses of a democratic form” (Rancière, On the Shores 60).

Knowledge, Badiou argues, “calms the passion of being” (Being and Event 294). It captures, encloses, and traps the infinity of invention within a known trajectory in which there is neither void nor improbable occurrences. That is why it does not recognize politics as a singularity, as the creation of space and time justified only by itself. Blind to singularity, knowledge is inherently normalizing. It can only grasp the new in terms of existing categories of the encyclopaedia.

Knowledge discerns, classifies, and names. In doing so, it attributes established values and orders the relation between words and things, inducing the order of the whole of existence. Codified into specialized language, knowledge makes possible the construction of an ordered hierarchy of being that opens no room for intervention (other than further interpretation). There is an inherent poverty in the universe of knowledge. It reduces any form of excess, contradiction, or whatever it cannot name properly, to nothing. Knowledge, as Badiou suggests, secures the construction of a solid tie between
reason and determinism: everything is decidable and nothing is undecidable. Sooner or later everything will be grasped by the patient exercise of discernment and classification, the capacity to judge and the capacity to establish connections between judgments (Being and Event 316). It will be judged, the judgements connected to each other, and in turn added under the common determinant of the encyclopedia (328-29). There is nothing unnameable from the point of view of knowledge.

The knowledge machine has played a major part in securing the “end of politics” in consensual democracies. The multiplication of forms of collective consultation and dialogue, from marketing research, data mining, opinion polls, and qualitative forms of data gathering, to the implementation of participatory budget discussions in certain cities—all contribute to profile the community and portions of it (ethnic minorities, women, gender orientations, classes, demographics, etc.), rectifying the imparity that launches political ruptures. Rancière argues that the mechanisms that objectify both problems and solutions in consensual democracies harmonize “the computation of the parts with the image of the whole” provided by the accounts of public opinion (On the Shores 101). Consensus, understood in this way, is an obstacle to emancipation. Democracy, on the other hand, requires Two, one of which is asymmetrically subtracted from knowledge, an indeterminate interlocutor that cannot become a partner in dialogue. To be democratic, an interlocution has to be improvised and unprogrammed, without representatives. Its language has to be preserved from objectification in terms of problems and solutions.

Appealing to Marxism or other more fashionable forms of radical discourse does not spare critics from summoning the normalizing effect of knowledge. This has been the case, for instance, in the demand to restore the name “worker” to the legions of “customer representatives” and “associates” that populate the depoliticized workplaces of post-Fordist economies. Others find a strategic value in naming women “houseworkers” and people whose work involves the manipulation of language and information the “cognitariat.” However, it is hard to see how these critical voices will reinforce the imparity and asymmetry by making the count more precise. Even the name “autonomy” can become a corset, freezing the singular becoming of movements as it becomes a doctrine, a restrictive party line that no longer allows for singular becomings to take
place. When this happens, as Colectivo Situaciones points out in relation to many of the Argentine experiments that cultivated autonomy as an identity, radical discourse becomes a morality that forecloses the paths of innovation, restricts the encounters, and reduces potentia (Colectivo Situaciones, “Politicizing Sadness”).

Politics is, of course, thirsty for research. But inquiry can remain political only if it is not separated from action, or, in other words, if it is subtracted from the normalizing effect of the practices of naming that enact a pedagogy. Subtraction requires an effort, because nominalism is the “spontaneous philosophy” of our world. As the “universal valoration of ‘competence’”, nominalism affirms that competent “is he who knows is capable of naming realities such as they are” (Badiou, Being and Event 309). In a consensual and consumerist democracy, governance requires armies of experts in needs, problems, and solutions to watch for the risk of politics. But the affirmation of knowledge does not necessarily mean that knowledge is valorized. As Badiou points out, the affirmation of knowledge does not mean that something is really known. Ours is a time that glorifies “knowledge without knowing” (Being and Event 310). Pedagogy as the rule of the wise is inscribed in the regime of the One of consensual democracy. The most intelligent are the ones who are capable of administering the satisfaction of multiple demands. As Rancière notes, in this peaceful realization of reason, the leaders are naturally produced by the education system (On the Shores 35). The kind of inquiry politics requires is a search for relations of connection and disconnection between, on one hand, things, actions, and words and, on the other, the new time and space founded by politics. A fundamental task of militant action is to ensure that politics remains unclassifiable and indiscernible for knowledge.

**Pedagogy and the Moral Vision of the World**

In his study of Spinoza, Gilles Deleuze traces the classical understanding of politics to a substantial conception of being (Expressionism 255-72, En medio 31-43, Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 374-80). The classical doctrine of natural right defines things by their essence—human beings are rational animals. There is, for the classical doctrine, a certain form of society in which all its members can realize the essence of the human species. Once that ideal society has been established as a concept, it follows that there are people who are better qualified to judge how to arrive at that order.
In the civil state people live according to the essence and constitute a good society. This doctrine brings to the fore the competence of wise men and women, pedagogues of all sorts, as the specialists in the definition of the Good and the ways to achieve it. The authority of the wise originates therein (Deleuze, *En medio* 34), in the same way as the soul commands, "from its own eminent nature and special finality," the body that obeys (Deleuze, *Expressionism* 255). The substantial conception of being and the authority of pedagogues imply each other. Deleuze calls this the moral vision of the world. A moral order always conceives of a totality, the One, that is superior to being and from which being descends.

The point of departure of the moral perspective is an essence common to human beings that does not exist in actuality but potentially (or, in terms used by the Scholastics, it does not exist *in actu* but in *potentia*). Thus, a rational society is the realization of an essence of humanity that is given in advance. In this conception, a society that honours human rights is one in which its members are regarded as capable of shared human attributes that need to be actualized. Thus, moral criticism starts by looking at examples of evil—negation of humanity—in society and calling for the restoration of the humanity that has been denied to the victims (Badiou, *Ethics* 10-11). A moral vision of communism, to give another example, originates in a certain notion of how production and distribution of wealth ought to function rationally at a social scale in order to allocate with justice both labour and its surplus in an ideal society. It begins from a preconstituted notion of the collective—the One—and assumes in advance that solidarity is the part of human nature that needs to be realized. Similarly, liberalism takes the preconstituted entrepreneurial individual as point of departure and as the ideal to realize in a free society.\(^{12}\)

In the moral vision individuals have rights because, first, they have duties. The premise that sustains social duties and obligations—the rule of law—is that there is potentially a society that expresses the best realization of the essence (humanity, solidarity, reason, work). The rights of individuals do not pre-exist society; rather, they derive from the latter. The civil state permanently suspends the state of nature.

In a moral conception of the social order people of knowledge—scholars, intellectuals, professionals of all kinds, learned individuals—have an authority grounded
in their purported competence “to judge the order of ends, of duties that follow from it, and of the offices and actions that it falls to each to exercise and carry out” (Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 259). Either individually or collectively (in the form of institutions), the learned know the essences and ends. Their opinion has a special value when it comes to determining what is best for the society. Philosophies of the One have a centre that articulates power and knowledge. From them it follows that the best order is one ruled by philosopher-kings and in which the happiness of nations depends on the instruction of entire populations.

Old and new utilitarians have sought to change circumstances through education. Emancipation by means of pedagogy is a moral response to the moral order that conceives change as originating in the spontaneous authority of wise men and women. The approach is not less moral if the savants are “progressive,” the ends are alternative, and the consideration of the essence that the society has to realize is carried out through intersubjective communicative action oriented towards mutual understanding.

The political event, as a collective thought that liberates the force of the multiple, is indifferent to the authority of the learned. Its taking place is an affirmation that escapes the predictions of even the wisest among the wise. Politics humiliates morality as it opens unknown and unforeseen possibilities of life. It was to confront the moral vision of the world that, with the sound of a war cry against the preeminence given by Descartes to the soul, Spinoza argued that nobody knows what a body can do: nobody can anticipate *potentia* (*Ethics* III, p. 2, sch.). The political event closes the distance between *potentia* and *actu*: it is *potentia in actu*, expressed in the becoming of multiple affirmations that rearrange all the dimensions of life, from economics, to the experience of time, bodies, places, work, words, forms of organization, and the very notion of what it is to resist.

Spinoza’s theory of natural right, which is much indebted to Hobbes’, moves away from the moral vision by arguing that a person’s right is her *potentia*, what she can do: “every natural thing has by nature as much right, as it has power to exist and operate” (*Political Treatise*, II, Sec. 292). The state of nature, as Spinoza conceived it, precedes the social or civil state, in which restrictions to what people can do are in place. The existence of these prohibitions is not founded on the existence of an ulterior state in which the essence of human beings—their being rational—would be fully realized. Rather, they
exist because what people can do, their \textit{potentia}, comes first. In other words, rights precede duties. If, for a society to be possible, rights have to be limited, it is because rights already exist. The civil state does not eliminate the state of nature.

The striking consequence of this conception of natural right is that, from the point of view of \textit{potentia}, everyone is equal. The wise person and the ignorant, the scientist and the psychopath, each of them is worth exactly the same in terms of one thing. Each perseveres to be what he is, he exerts his \textit{potentia} at any time and all the time, for "whatever anyone, be he learned or ignorant, attempts and does, he attempts and does by supreme natural right" (Spinoza, \textit{Political Treatise}, Ch. II, Sec. 8). The perseverance of their \textit{potentia} makes people equal. As Deleuze argues, because for Spinoza \textit{potentia} is actual—no longer separated from the act, and, therefore, from the affects it experiences at any moment—it is not determined by ends that the specialists in the essence of society are entitled to judge. In Spinoza’s ethical vision of the world the competence of learned men and women, their automatic political authority, is left without foundation (Deleuze, \textit{Expressionism} 259-60). Ethics tears apart the link between pedagogy and politics, between knowledge and the subject.\textsuperscript{13}

Ethics, in this case, has nothing to do with the common usage of this word to define adjustment to norms—as, for instance, in the expression "research ethics" which is sometimes used in the policy vocabulary of universities. “Ethics,” in this last sense, corresponds to the moral vision of the world. In Spinoza’s sense, ethics is concerned with the modes of existence, the different situations into which people are thrown. Different degrees of \textit{potentia} correspond to different modes of existence. Sadness, for instance, can only reduce \textit{potentia} while politicization is the incarnation of joyful actions.

Ethics is concerned with modes of existence that, to a moral standpoint, appear most of the time as meaningless fragments. When modes of existence are the objects of study of a research subject they are inevitably abstracted. Knowledge only captures their extrinsic features—perceived resemblances and differences—and separates them from their essential relation. The \textit{potentia} of a mode cannot be represented: it exists only in the singularity of the act that effects it.

\textit{Potentia} does not refer to potentiality or possibility but to the actual, instant condition of the relation between infinite particles affecting each other. The mode is the
actual infinity of affections taking place between the infinite particles that compose each
being. Potentia does not evoke an ulterior moment when it would be fully realized. It is
here and now, all the time, grounded in the actual infinity of collections of particles that
each person or thing is composed of, affecting the collections of particles that others are,
composing and decomposing each other's characteristic relations. Possibility invokes the
moral authority of the knowers of ends. In contrast, potentia opens up a horizon of
uncertainty. Potentia, which is actual and constantly changing, always depends on how
bodies (both things in the physical world and ideas) affect each other at every moment.

Thus, for Spinoza, Deleuze and Badiou, the infinite is actual. It is not a
transcendental dimension negatively defined beyond the finite—infinitus means “non
finite”—but rather its existence is given in actu. The infinity of potentia contrasts with
the finitude of the One, identity, resemblance, and repetition. But at the same time it is not
a flight toward the indefinite dimension of infinite deconstruction that characterizes the
philosophies of Heidegger and Derrida. The notion of actual infinity is crucial to activate
the power to do because it tells us that all that seems to be finite is infinite under a certain
relation—or that everything presented as One is in fact the result of an operation of
counting as One. The notion is therefore fundamental for those who disobey the calls
coming from political realism that all that can be done in politics today are variations
within a set of unmodifiable—finite—sets of rules and principles.

To say that potentia is actual is to say that it is not a state, a permanent or
objective condition that an individual, a group or a society can achieve. The democratic
qualities of a political regime—even if it offers infinite possibilities, multiple forms of
communication, mobility and identification—are not sufficient to guarantee the potentia
of its citizens because the objective existence of pluralism does not bring about actual
potentia. Rather, potentia appears only subjectively, as the actual experience of the
infinite; that is, not in permanently established forms of participation and democratic
management, but in the sporadic moments that open spaces for participation, undo
existing roles, de-institute existing institutions. Potentia is not to be found necessarily, for
instance, in a worker-run factory, but it certainly is in the struggle by workers to seize
control and demonstrate to themselves and everybody else that they can run the factory
and defend what they have conquered. *Potentia* is the actual and concrete experience of the infinite, not the transcendental infinity of objective manifestations of plurality.

The ethical perspective stands the philosophies of the One and their inevitable hierarchies on their head. *Potentia* is exerted to the limit at every moment: such is the basis of equality. While there are degrees of *potentia*, this difference is not the foundation for a hierarchy. It does not mean that the unlearned and the learned person are equal; it means that they are equal in that they are both defined by their *potentia*. Each of them is as perfect as he or she can be in the exertion of his or her *potentia*. Differences in *potentia* are not hierarchical. The scholar and the unlearned, the activist and the couch potato, the intellectual and the simple member of the masses are equal in that all exert their *potentia* all the time, at any moment. This equality is axiomatic and can only be verified *in actu*. It is affirmed in action and not in relation to a regime that would measure it, because actual equality is precisely what dissolves the finitude of all objective regimes of difference (Badiou, Metapolitics 104). Equality cannot be deduced from history or from any other form of knowledge in general, because by being actual it does not belong to the order of knowledge but to the regime of thought.

In a moral vision of the world, everyone judges other people and is judged by them. There is always a higher order, an ideal community, and a realization of the collective essence represented by the state and its laws. Moral difference is a matter of judgment. The ethical vision does not judge. It conceives of no absolute forms of Good and Evil. Because being is multiple, there is not One superior to beings; there is no Good. Nor is there a parameter on the basis of which judgment can be formulated because nothing transcends multiplicity. On the other hand, Evil is a nonentity because there are only compositions between particles and every composition is an affirmation. Even death and destruction are affirmations because they are the result of the formation of new compositions. Without the notions of Good and Evil, how does the ethical standpoint discern between good and bad? How can each mode of existence find a criterion for orientation? Does ethic escape morality only to fall into relativism (which is a form of reinstating a transcendental infinity, the notion that the infinite cannot be grasped, as in certain forms of postmodernism or the infinite deconstruction of deconstructions)? In his reading of Spinoza, Deleuze suggests that the criterion for distinguishing between good
and bad is the expansion or diminishment of *potentia*, a fluctuation that depends on how *potentia* affects and is affected. Every affect can be evaluated as a form of joy and sadness.¹⁵ There are encounters between bodies that produce affects that cause joy and expand *potentia*, and there are other encounters that cause sadness and reduce *potentia*.

### The Potentia of Thought

In the perspective elaborated by Badiou that I have been discussing in the preceding sections, politics is akin to the event; it is that which has taken place when (and if) the truth of the event remains beyond the grasp of knowledge. This does not mean that politics is divorced from thought. On the contrary, politics *is* a thought. Knowledge and thought are different in nature. Thought does not depend on knowledge. An event is an act of thought when knowledge has been unable to foresee it. The event shatters historical necessity—the logic of beginnings and ends—and, along with it, the entanglement of history with the possibility of having rational access to it. If history is necessary, the current moment is either the completion of past tendencies or a stage in the evolution towards the realization of an ideal of the totality. But, from the perspective of the event, history, as different from nature, consists in ruptures, unpredictable innovations that disestablish hitherto consistent truths and institutions, producing new regimes of meaning and new assemblages of bodies.

Politics and thought are interchangeable expressions when politics is faithful to the dysfunction of the bond that structures the collective as One. Politics has taken place only when the bond is suspended: “political activity is an unbinding, and is experienced as such by the (mass) movement” (Badiou, *Metapolitics* 72). Politics is the thought of an inconsistent multiplicity that is both intellectual and practical.

The central axioms of politics, Badiou argues, are “people think” and “the state does not think” (*Metapolitics* 73). Politics consists of multiple unmediated (unbound) experiences of thought. But neither all of these experiences combined nor even smaller groupings of them form a subject that can be accounted for by representation. For politics to remain such it has to abandon any desire to succumb to the finite confines of policy—or, to use an expression borrowed from Foucault and Rancière, it has to avoid becoming *police*. Police deals with the exact count of the parts of society (workers, bourgeoisie, middle-class, women, members of an ethnic group, liberals, conservatives, socialists,
etc.), each made representable by the particular bond defining their sectoral interests, ideals of happiness, and images of pain that can be known in detail. Politics, on the other hand, is “unbound from the state” (Badiou, *Metapolitics* 73). It is driven by a collective intelligence that escapes any reduction to the One.

In this view, politics is the labour of a subject. But, an ethical subject is not a metaphysical body, a mass or organization. There is no head at the centre directing the action. In ethics, the subject as a substance disappears and what remains is the becoming of potentia, sometimes described through the phenomenology of affects that bring it into existence (Deleuze, Lazzarato) or through the traces left by the event in existing truths (Badiou) or the truths that it de-institutes (Colectivo Situaciones). The subject, in this sense, is not a substance (Badiou, *Being and Event* 391-92). It is never a collection of individuals that can be counted as One, as when somebody says “working class,” “the people,” or even “the multitude.” From the point of view of the situation and its encyclopedia of knowledges, the subject cannot be counted, even though it emerges from within the situation. It cannot be named by language, even metaphoric or poetical, because it exceeds the realm of the nameable. Nor is the subject an empty point to be filled alternatively by this or that particular group (392). Even though it is local, the subject is not a point, but a multiplicity subtracted from the operation of counting as one. The subject is not an organization of the meaning of experience. It is, in other words, neither a hegemonic articulation of representations nor the difference that challenges and seeks to occupy the hegemonic void when the articulation is broken (Raúl Cerdeiras, “Debate Laclau-Cerdeiras” 134). This subject finds support in names that name nothing, in calls for a general de-institution of existing values, like the Zapatista “¡Ya basta!” (enough) or the Argentinean “¡Que se vayan todos!” (all of them must go). The subject is an insistence, the building up of a protagonism that pierces through existing truths. It is subtractive because it has no other being than its becoming, a path that is not already contained in its interiority. The becoming is open: an eternal return of chance. The subject, in this sense, does not exist in every situation and, when it exists, its presence is ephemeral. Politics is rare, and so is the subject.

From Badiou’s perspective, the irruption of politics gives the subject a measure of the state and of its own capacity, a measure of its potentia, its power to overcome the
repetition of the same, to create the new from scratch and persevere even when the
unbearable murmur of common sense tells people that changing the world is impossible.
A subject is always local, but its existence is affirmed at the edge of a void whose
manifestation in each situation is the dissolution of “the way things are.” The subject is an
act of overcoming finitude, passivity and apathy. There is no greater enemy of acting
freely than fatigue: “not to be tired is a major political duty, but not the easiest to carry
out” (Badiou, “La ética” 64). What the subject affirms is not an identity but its multiple
being, its exhuberance and excess in relation to the situation, its capacity to remain
multiple and singular, infinite and incomparable (Badiou, Ethics 43).

From the perspective of the multiple, thinking in the situation involves going
beyond existing knowledges entrenched in concrete local practices and values. In the
process of thinking, the subject emerges within the structure of meanings and practices
that define common sense. But, the subject is singular and indiscernible, subtracted from
the situation within which it emerges, of which it is a component, and which it punctures
(Badiou, “Presentación” 13). While the point of view of the state, of police—the moral
vision—is general, there is not a general or global politics. Politics can be a thought only
in a situation.

The structure that Badiou refers to as *the situation* is a concept whose genealogy
can be traced back to the ontologies of Heidegger and Sartre. In Heidegger, the situation
is the finite and contingent structure into which the Dasein is thrown (Heidegger, Being
and Time 341-48; Zizek 17). For Sartre, the struggle for freedom is action against the
determinations we face in the situations in which we fall. The situation is a structure-
effect that is at the very root of our consideration of whether something exists: we cannot
consider that something exists if we do not count it (Badiou, Being and Event 52). But,
again, to be counted everything has to be, in the first place, a multiplicity. The situation is
the structured multiplicity that the count counts. It is, to use Deleuze and Guattari’s terms,
a “haecceity,” the here and now of a machinic assemblage formed by interpenetrating
 multiplicities. Caught in an assemblage, the individual does not talk or act, but rather is
“talked” and “acted” by it (A Thousand Plateaus 36). The situation can be considered a
monad, both multiple, because it contains all the relations of the world to which it
belongs, and singular, because it expresses only a part of such relations (Lazzarato, Políticas del Acontecimiento 58; Colectivo Situaciones, 19 y 20 30).

We are responsible for the situations in which we fall, even though we are not conscious authors of the world we live in. Bodies and minds are knitted into the concrete determinations that compose every situation. To forget this is not only idealistic, but also a concession to the capitalist homogenization of time and space that wipes out the concrete sense of situation (Benasayag, Pensar la libertad 89). It is in this sense that capitalism is most spectacular in Guy Debord's sense: the spectacle is that which turns the world into a single situation by producing a Weltanschauung that consists in an objectified vision of the world that both unifies society and remains separate (Society of the Spectacle 3, 4 and 5). Becoming subject necessarily involves, first, a subtraction from the world as a single universal situation over which we, as spectators, can make choices. This implies ceasing to partake in the majoritarian common sense and become a minority. Second, it requires a commitment to the situation of whose multiple determinations we are both producers and products.¹⁸

In the situation, emancipation has nothing to do with exercising free choice. That, rather, is the market ideology of freedom put in circulation in the spectacular world, which, for its inhabitants, implies forgetting that the market chooses them before they have the chance to choose between the available options or forgetting that the spectacle constructs people as spectators even when the contents are “critical” (Benasayag and Aubenas 80).¹⁹ Acting freely in the situation involves a decision over precisely that which, to the knowledge available in the situation, appears undecidable. To the extent that the decision presupposes a deconstruction of the situation, a line of flight that undoes a territorialization, a free act competes with, rather than opposes, capitalism, the progressive side of it that Marx saw as responsible for melting in the air all that appears solid. The decision to embrace a revolutionary cause is not the consequence of knowing the situation better, even though that knowledge is almost always necessary. Whether choice is more or less “informed” makes no difference from the point of view of emancipation. A decision is not based on an accumulation of knowledge. It is, rather, the result of the subjective encounter with something that is experimented—an experience.
that is not exclusively mental—as a truth, which even for those who embrace it remains indiscernible.

Neither education, nor progressive spectacles, nor engaging dialogue through new media, have political effect in themselves, no matter how critical the content delivered by the professor, how radical the teaching method, how mind-blowing the cultural artifact or how dialogic the interaction enabled by the new medium. No accumulation of knowledge—certainly, not even reading Badiou or Rancière—can turn a person into a subject. Education can inform choice, but not a decision. Indeed, choice is what distracts us from choosing away from the encyclopedic determinations that inform choice—that is, it distracts us from choosing subtractively, the only gesture that can significantly alter the situation. This distraction is what prevents the manifestation of the void, the encounter with it.20 No fidelity thrives only because of knowledge, which can at best reproduce the event in the uncreative form of the repetition of the same, as dogmatism and orthodoxy, as Marxism, even when it claims to be “re-thinking” it (Being and Event 434).

Thinking is, in the first place, a deconstruction of bonds, identities, partnerships, gatherings, and ordinations. It does not stop while the new knowledges maintain the situation as a creative flow in which thinking remains a practice of all the singularities. In politics, the thought of multiple situations is the only connection between those involved in the thinking process. No symbolic mediation, no communication or dialogue is itself thinking. Universality across situations is neither represented nor communicated. It is possible because all situations have in common that in none of them the multiplicity that they are can be perfectly sutured. There is always a void, a fault, a point that, when touched, sense becomes nonsense. This element, always present but never represented, makes possible the resonances between situations, even when there is no linguistic or other type of symbolic exchange between them. Thus, there is no need for an explicit articulation between situations, because they already have in common the fact that they are sutured by a fault. It is by acting at the edge of that void that the universality of a subject travels beyond each situation.21

If one follows this logic it is possible to say that politics is a thought and there is no political thinking outside the thinking-doing that politics consists of. In other words, politics is not the activity of master-thinkers, a space of objectivity upon which
intellectuals have important things to say. The ability to exercise judgement in public
does not belong to the realm of politics but to that of opinion (Badiou, Metapolitics 13).
For those who believe politics and opinion are interchangeable, a committed militant
seized by a thought is a potential tyrant, an irrational figure that needs some kind of
treatment. Consensual democracies champion freedom of opinion, but arguably have
less tolerance for freedom of thought.

If politics disqualifies opinion, it is not in the name of pure action without debate.
Dialogue and communication are, indeed, essential to politics, but only when words can
achieve something beyond themselves: “debate is political only to the extent that it
crystallizes in a decision” (Badiou, Metapolitics 16). The judgement of spectators is
foreign to politics and so are electoral campaigns. Voting itself, even when it takes place
in the context of grassroots assemblies exercising some form of “horizontal democracy,”
are not examples of politics but of pure judgement, mere acts of opinion that do not
necessarily open towards a decision in the situation. As dialogue gravitates toward the
centre of consensus that keeps the One of democracy in place—usually departing as little
as possible from common sense in order to appease frictions—the political becomes a
realm for conversation about how to run countries, municipalities, neighbourhoods or
student unions more efficiently. In this way, the plurality of opinions that is so often
presented as the epitome of liberal democracy leaves no room for discussing genuine
alternatives. Common sense is the underlying norm of public opinion, the bond that
secures plurality as One in parliamentary democracy.

Instead of consistency given by knowledge, opinion and communication, the
subject of politics has a constancy guaranteed only by its trust or confidence. This fidelity
is a wager that no knowledge can guarantee because politics is a creation, impossible
without taking risks—risks that no knowledge can anticipate. An event is such only if it is
unforeseeable (Badiou, “Movimiento social” 24-5). An action that can be anticipated
falls within the scope of administration, not politics. To become subject involves forcing
existing knowledges—not just as ideas, but also as values and meanings inscribed in
practices—to the point that they become inconsistent.

If the ordinary behaviour of human beings, as conceived by Spinoza, demands the
perseverance of somebody in his/her being, breaking through the knowledges of the
situation requires an extra exertion of *potentia*, a desire stronger than anything already known. Thinking is a militant excess of perseverance, which the subject pursues even at the expense of its own life. Badiou has characterized this militant perseverance as *disinterested* because it has nothing to do with the finitude of the human body, its “needs,” pains, or pleasures (Ethics 49). Rather, to become a subject is, in this sense, to become infinite: it involves making present the immortal in us. The questions that a subject needs to resolve are: “How can I continue to think?” “How can I persevere in being immortal?” The subject escapes the gravitational force of the eternal return of the same and *potentia* is its escape velocity.

In my view, Badiou brings the discussion on the relation between thought and politics to a very interesting terrain when he argues that thought is directly experienced by the subject and, for that reason, cannot be communicated. Nobody becomes a subject by acquiring a particular cognitive content. Subjects are called into action by an encounter with a truth that is as much mental as it is corporeal, even when it remains indiscernible (Badiou, Ethics 51). It is perseverance alone what gives consistency to thought. Thought is not belief. It rather has the form of an encounter, very much like love begins with an encounter between two people. The encounter with politics is guided only by chance, and like all that is subjected to chance, it cannot be anticipated. It is about the subject being *possessed* by what s/he has encountered and about maintaining a fidelity without forgetting. The consistency of the subject is its becoming, its striving toward infinity, and its fidelity (Badiou, Ethics 52).

Spinoza called the surplus of perseverance *beatitude*. The term might suggest asceticism, but in fact it refers to an experience of intense joy that surpasses the finite boundaries of pain and pleasure. Beatitude does not involve renunciation. On the contrary, only the *potentia* that results from the active joy experienced by being in possession of the power to act—not just passive enjoyment—can deliver the intensity of being necessary for overcoming the repetitive perseverance in being what we are.

The realization that there is a permanent becoming of *potentia* tied to the flow of desire, punctuated by the affects that arise from encounters, is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the existence of politics and thought. Nor is it enough to identify and describe the many acts of everyday rebellion. For there to be politics (and thinking)
there has to be an active “participation in the infinity that exists in each situation” (Benasayag and Sztulwark 54). Only in this way is it possible to reach the foundational exigency, the disturbing problematic nucleus that gives consistency to each situation. The encounter with such exigency is what constantly renews the avenues for the struggle for justice. The sustained—infinite—fidelity to emancipation practiced in the situation defines politics as a form of thought.

**Antipedagogy: An Ethical Intervention**

The moral vision of the world is pedagogical and every pedagogical undertaking, even the most progressive, honest, and well-intentioned ones, incarnate a moral outlook. The task pedagogues seek to accomplish is to illuminate the path to the good society. In this sense, whenever a distinctive intellect is what grants authority to emancipate, the moral vision is reproduced. The ethical perspective, on the other hand, takes equality as the point of departure: everybody thinks. Thought is the trace left by an exertion of *potentia*. The moral standpoint conceives difference of knowledge as different capacity to think. The point of departure of ethics is the equal capacity to think. The question is when, why, and how people make this capacity effective. Ethical difference appears in the greater or lesser *potentia* with which that capacity can be exercised. The problems of *potentia* are about how people affect and are affected at each moment.

Thinking is a practice of protagonists. Thought, in this sense, is founded in equality because it requires no previous knowledge. Even when they do not make history as they please or under conditions they can choose, the multitudes reveal in their struggles an intelligence of protagonists. As Rancière points out, the idea that the masses are creators of history forces each progressive scholar and intellectual, in particular those invoking Marxism, to “rethink the question of their own practice and knowledge, to reflect upon their own place in the distribution of positions of power and knowledge that reproduce bourgeois domination” (Althusser 42). The oppressed need, in order to think, neither the humane charity of the good souls seeking to alleviate their misery nor the wise judgments of enlightened men and women on how society should be run.

A politics of non-representation neither questions the mechanism of representation that has become part of the common sense of politics nor tries to devise forms of direct democracy that could replace them. When it is no longer a means to an end, politics is
different from representation (Cerdeiras, “No-representación” 66). Outside state administration, politics moves in the realm of representation when it becomes a piece of information, an object that a subject analyzes, one more region of knowledge that universities and think tanks can investigate. There is representation when those who “know what is good and convenient for the victims” feel entitled by that knowledge to “to offer themselves as representatives of those victims and be their spokespersons” (Cerdeiras, “No-representación” 72). Nor is representation overcome when politics is considered to coincide with fulfilling economic needs. For a certain Marxism, it has been self-evident since Lenin’s What is to be Done? that there is no politics in economic struggles. If Marxism has nothing to offer today in terms of a capacity to produce political ruptures it is because it has been integrated and dissolved inside the administrative political machine; it has become knowledge. A politics of non-representation begins by inventing a new sequence of political thought that shifts its focus away from the politics of ends and the scope of global transformation towards the situation and potentia.

Fragments of a politics of non-representation have been emerging for the last four decades in several places, and, most remarkably, in Latin America since the early 1990s. As the Zapatista Juntas del Buen Gobierno and the autonomous experiments of peasants and autonomous workers in Argentina show, non-representation has not meant, in these instances, non-organization, but rather the creation of new forms of struggle that escape representation in all possible forms.25 Such struggles provide a de-centred politics whose goal is neither seizing the state nor wiping it out, in which the focus has rather been on the local creation of new values, new bonds and modes of being together. In this context, the parties inspired in the Marxist tradition have had only marginal presence.

The ethical character of these struggles raises the question about which forms of involvement of those people “whose business is to think” (to borrow an expression from Rancière) are possible that overcome the political limits of pedagogy. I am calling antipedagogy the different efforts to think and practice ethical interventions, carried out by collectives and groups linked to concrete struggles that do not seek to articulate an alternative majority or a new hegemony, but rather are committed to their situations.

“Philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it”—antipedagogy agrees with this statement as long as the “it” of the second
clause does not make reference to the same metaphysical “world” of the spectacle and contemplative knowledge. Changing the world is thinking in the situation, for the situation, and from the situation. Thinking, in this sense, is indifferent to knowledge. It belongs to the order of creation that produces compositions that are at odds with the collective bond that re institutes the transcendental One and dissolves the situation.

The question that gives meaning to antipedagogy is not how to think about but how to think with. Antipedagogy does not hope for the political event to happen. It does not know what politics is or should look like. It does not know “what is to be done,” but rather raises the question “what is politics?” It does have, however, a few certainties about how politics does not look. Antipedagogy is divorced from ends other than potentia. It is concerned with the problems of the will, with affect, desire, and thought. It is not interested in the road to state power, but rather with the multiple paths to potentia.

Potentia is not an object that a subject can observe or a field of objective reality that research can adequately represent. The ethical world is a horizontal, ever-changing network of compositions of relations. Reason cannot anticipate potentia: the problems of action belong to the terrain of the unconscious. The flow of molecular compositions is an unconscious interplay of causes and effects over which conscious human will never has complete control: “the science of activity is also the science of what is necessarily unconscious” (Deleuze, Nietzsche 42). Potentia depends, at any moment, on the multiplicity of affects that a body experiences. From the point of view of potentia, modes of affecting and being affected are the real world. They are not ideologies that conceal the reality. The maximum of potentia is the correlate of an equally important openness to affects, an enhanced capacity to be affected. Potentia can be appreciated only in the local infinity of the act because of the density of the meshwork of affects of which it is part, to which it actively contributes, by which it is constantly affected.

The image of thought sanctioned as the most valid by the moral vision of the world separates the will to potentia “from particular determined forces, from their quantities, qualities and directions” (Deleuze, Nietzsche 50). In this vision, thought avoids error by embracing methods that have been tested for their capacity to produce truth in different times and places. In contrast, potentia can only affirm itself by acknowledging the forces and relations from which it cannot be separated, which are
always in a concrete place and time. Thinking is, therefore, something that happens only in a situation. Dwelling in the actual infinity of affections is the only way in which it is possible to think, because “thought itself is conceivable only in an ontological unity with the being of the situation” (Benasayag, Pensar la libertad 169). Inhabiting one situation, or many, is the equivalent of being a Gramscian organic intellectual from the point of view of multiplicity, as long as inhabiting is not conceived as data gathering for a separate instance of thinking considered the truly valid one, but as a composition with the forces of the situation in a process of thought.

Ethics is materialism without the normative notion of objectivity. The here and now is itself singular, and thus a ground for universality, when it subtracts itself from the “predicative description” of particularities by knowledge (Badiou, “Eight Theses” 144). Indeed, the only possible universality is the one that emerges from thought that plunges into the infinite multiplicity of the situation, overcomes its limits opening up its plurality, declares inconsistent the existing bonds that bind the situation to the world, and affirms its sovereignty to create new meanings and forms of life. There is universality only in the purely subjective effort of thought that detaches itself from the “objectivity” of established collective bonds. Thought emancipates itself from need, representation, and historicism. Free thought occurs only at a distance from any notion of the world as a complex unity or any notion that cements heterogeneous multiplicities into a whole (Badiou, Metapolitics 43). Antipedagogy is a thought that seeks to abandon the forms of intellectuality that enable a reversible passage between the subjective and the objective, including dialectics, scientism, sociological categories such as ‘social class,’ the distinction between theory and practice, and historicism, to give a few examples.

The moral vision of the world spatializes time and globalizes space. Its time has beginings and ends; it is a time of progress or decline. The time of ethics is now. Potentia is an infinitesimal variation between two moments (Deleuze, En medio 89). It is always in actu; its dimension is the infinity of the act. It is all the time as intense as it can be depending on the affections experienced at each moment. Potentia increases or diminishes from one moment to the next.

A global space—the world as One—is a fundamental component of the moral vision. The abstract universality of capitalism produces—and is produced by—the effect
of One world, a global view that presents vast complex realities beyond the power of any local agent to change and that summons the mechanisms of a moral vision of the world. Two different types of responses in the recent decades acknowledge, in very different ways, the same global perspective. On one hand, the rise of particularisms abandons the question of universality altogether. Instead of the world as One situation, each particularism based on gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, etc. conceives politics as the inclusion of its own situation in the totality they at the same time disavow. On the other, the movements that seek to nurture an alternative globalization to oppose the globalization of capital confuse universality with totality. The spatial dimension of \textit{potentia} is here. Here and now are the coordinates of the actual—of action—that registers the duration of affections, the experience of affect as constantly changing continuum.

The situation is the space of \textit{restricted action}, the locus of concrete creation released from the alliance of temporal determinism and reason (Malgré Tout 59). Restricted action, an expression coined by Mallarmé, is, as Badiou points out, a “possible name for the truly thought-provoking sequences of politics \textit{in actu}” (Metapolitics 104). To inhabit the situation entails abandoning the temptation of taking cues from History and the World. As the sphere of restricted action, the situation is a singular assemblage, a monad: “a world in itself or aspiring to become such, that produces its own temporality and its own space” (Lazzarato, Políticas del acontecimiento 61).

Nobody is \textit{born} free. One \textit{becomes} free. As Deleuze points out, “to be thrown into the world is precisely to risk at every instant encountering something that decomposes me” (En medio 92). Emancipation is the outcome of a process that begins and ends in the situations into which we are thrown. It is the art of selecting compositions, of forming bonds that allow for the maximum \textit{potentia}. It is an empirical process: only by experimentation can we know what we are capable of.

Antipedagogues seek to accompany those processes of experimentation, to experiment with them while letting themselves open to be changed by good encounters, that is, encounters that simultaneously expand their power to act as well as the power to act of those they work with. \textit{Potentia} operates on a materialist terrain. Composition is the production of concrete fraternal bonds that regenerate the social tissue precisely where capitalism fractures it through individuation, separation, abstraction, and
commodification. Its requisites are subtraction from the spectacular world and inhabiting the here and now of which we are part.
Chapter Two

Pedagogy of the Citizen: Police, Politics, and the Equality of Intelligences

The Elephant

Cármen de Patagones is a quiet and small old coastal town located about a thousand kilometres south of Buenos Aires. There, on September 28th, 2004, at 7:30 in the morning, a fifteen year old boy entered his classroom and, using a 9 mm pistol that belonged to his father and three cartridges of ammunition, fired thirteen shots against his twenty nine classmates until his gun jammed, killing three and leaving five others seriously injured. The teenager was a shy and quiet kid, who was never involved in any trouble. The scene of the shooting was the best high-school in town, where all middle-class parents wanted to send their kids.26

A couple of days earlier, the members of Taller de los Sábados,27 had been watching the film Elephant, from director Gus Van Sant, which scrutinizes the incidents that led to a massacre at an unidentified American school, which the informed viewer is expected to associate with Columbine School in Boulder, Colorado. The experience of watching “that piece of North American life” portrayed in the film produced mixed feelings among the members of the workshop. Although they found that the images revealed with impecable lucidity significant features of the condition of being a teenager today, they also felt that the world portrayed by the film was distant: “Something like this could not have happened in Argentina,” they said to each other (Taller de los Sábados).

The Patagones massacre encouraged the members of Taller to look for clues to understand the conditions of teenagers in the film they had just watched. The incidents at both Boulder and Patagones raise the issue of the uncoupling of teenagers from the world of adults, which is lived by the former as boredom and analyzed by teachers and psychologists as inadequacy. In its closeup look at the lives of the protagonists of a school massacre, Elephant shows that the teenagers who killed their classmates were not clearly driven by either psychological, criminal, anti-authoritarian, heroic, or romantic motives. The availability of guns in the United States—one of the main themes of the other famous
film on this issue, Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine*—explains something, but not much. For if it was for this reason, the rare case to study would be the very possibility of a high school student not being killed by one of his or her classmates. Rather, what is disturbing about the teenagers who attend the school depicted by *Elephant* is that they seem to enjoy all the benefits of living in a suburban community. The school offers a variety of activities, all of which seem to combine into what is customarily considered a rich learning environment, in which teenagers can walk freely outside the classrooms and participate in courses animated by a conversational style in which the respect for differences prevails.

Nevertheless, the lives of the teenagers are insipid. The lines they describe as they walk along the hallways seem flat. Their paths lack intensity, the encounters with others stir only vanishing affects. What leaves the viewer uneasy, *Taller* argues, is precisely the “appearance that ‘nothing happens.’” Yet something happens; and the up-close look at the characters, enhanced by Gus Van Sant’s use of subjective viewpoints, is precisely the reason why that ‘something’ that is going on never comes into full view. The distance between ‘nothing’ and ‘something’ is revealed by inquiring into the intriguing title of the film, which was taken from a line by Bernard MacLaverty: “The Elephant in our living room, nobody mentions it, because it's just so enormous” (“Elephant (2003)”). It so thoroughly occupies the field of vision that each can see a piece, but nobody can see the totality of the beast.

The school seems to leave no visible marks on the students. And it is precisely that elephant-sized, impossible to grasp, figure that gives unity to the random fragments that compose the lives of the protagonists. Teenagers who go to school—in Boulder, Patagones, and many other places—*know* that the elephant is there. What the knowledge of the elephant consist of, *Taller* argues, is an awareness that transcendent orderings of law and values have been put deeply into question in contemporary capitalist societies.28

An elephant inside a living room is so visible that its presence comes to occupy all that exists. We look at it from so close that its mass saturates the space to the point that there seems to be no void. Filling all the space and time, the elephant’s visibility is so overpowering that it becomes invisible.
In Plato’s ideal republic, the functioning of the community as such depended as much on universal laws as on the constant reabsorption of those laws by the community through education. The pedagogy of the republic is much more than what those officially appointed as teachers and by different sorts of schools can offer. Pedagogy coincides with the law; it takes all the time and space as it is offered in the harmony of all that “is visually and aurally up for grabs” (Rancière, Disagreement 68). To maintain its existence, the polity must harmonize individual characters and collective customs by internalizing in each individual the bond that defines the count of the community as One. Pedagogy is constitutive of the fabric of the republic. According to Rancière, it oversees the segmentation of the social space and acquires microphysical efficacy in the sciences of the individual and collective soul (69-70).

The modern state produces and reproduces citizenship as a specific form of inclusion in the collective bond. To be a citizen of a modern republic, an equal among equals before the state, each individual needs to be able to perform a series of operations that become essential to inhabit the particular logic that gives cohesion to equality thus conceived. But the ability to perform those operations, the subjective support for the state, requires a series of specific practices and rituals that have to be instituted upon the flesh of each individual. Life as a citizen of a modern republic involves the passage through institutions defined by a disciplinary regime, such as the family, the school, the hospital, the factory, the prison, or the military barracks. Through these institutions, the state produces meanings that provide an orientation to lived experience.29

The school system plays a defining role in the constitution of the nation by instituting among citizens the fable of the origin of their being together, the narrative of their relation to the totality circumscribed by the nation-state. This mission involves institutions as diverse as the school, the national press, monuments, civic celebrations, and museums. The fiction of a common origin serves as the foundation for the social peace of the community. The coming together of citizens under a common fable of origin eliminates the struggle between classes, but cannot avoid a radical confession: the equality of everybody with everybody else (Rancière, Disagreement 78). Citizenship is the name for being included in the count. To become citizens, children have to go to school, the mad are institutionalized, and criminals are sent to prison.
The institution of equality through education is nothing more than equal opportunities within the visibility enabled by the relation between citizens. It leaves out of the count the system of distribution that makes such equality only virtual. Criticism that seeks to expand the scope of inclusion, however, creates a new invisibility—a new basis for inequality that does not appear within the limits of the visible—by accepting the hierarchies of intelligence on which pedagogy is built.

While other disciplinary institutions confined the misuses of reason and limited their own capacity to correct individuals to the minimum necessary for their inclusion as citizens, the institutions specialized in education were unique in that they organized reason into a distribution of identities, functions, and capacities. In this sense, the education apparatuses constitute a crystallization of a moral vision of the world that devalues not-knowing as impoverishment of reason. Impoverishment is turned into impotence, into a delegation of potentia to others. The pedagogization of society relentlessly extends this mechanism, always opening new horizons and reaching new areas and aspects of everyday life not yet colonized by the relation between the wise and the ignorant.

Pedagogy, the Global Classroom, and the Social Factory

Although the myth of the origins of modern education is sometimes constructed as an elaborate story that goes back to paideia in classical Greece, education is a concept of more recent coinage, used for the first time in Europe in the late 15th century. The instrumentality of education to the production of docile bodies, carriers of socially useful knowledge, was clearly at issue behind the numerous philanthropic initiatives that fostered the advancement of the education of the population since the early stages of capitalism.

Undeniably, modern education was not simply imposed upon people. A desire for education rising from below, fed by the wish “to flee the condition of the man in the leather apron” (Rancière, Nights of Labor 7), has existed since education began to promise a way to overcome the discrimination between manual and intellectual labour. Disregarding the teachings of the socialist and communist traditions, which, for over a century, have depicted the glory of manual labour, generations of workers have deprived themselves of many hours of their sleep to assert their capacity for intellectual creation.
The edifice of modem education builds upon this desire only to confirm that degrees only seldom help climb the social ladder and that in capitalist society there is a place for everyone as long as each remains in his or her place.

The production of an educated labour force is in tune with the acceleration of the circulation of commodities and the valorization of capital. In recent years, with the de-institution of the role of the state in the formation of the collective bond by free market economics, pedagogy has been affected in its consistency, meaning, and field of implication (Lewkowicz, Cantarelli, et al. 46). The institutions that were born to regulate the production of subjectivity in disciplinary confinement have not disappeared. Primary and secondary education remains compulsory. Schools continue to exist, but they no longer produce and reproduce citizens in the same way as before. Their utilitarian dimension comes into view in full force as they adapt to the dynamic of the market. The institutions of disciplinary societies either adapt to the flows of the market or become fragments, neither coordinated by the state from a central position nor linked in their functioning to other institutions. Pedagogy is modulated across a series of mechanisms no longer confined to institutions.33

Inspired by numerous forms of resistance that bring into question the social value of behaviour acquired under the supervision of a pedagogue, Ivan Illich proclaimed in 1970 the urgent need to “deschool society.” The notion of deschooling sought to name a tendency expressed in a variety of resistances against disciplinary education that had mounted over the previous decade, including student struggles, desertion of teachers from their jobs, growth of the dropout rate, and the free school movement. Illich believed that the question was not if deschooling would happen but when. He anticipated that, in the hands of politicians and capitalists, the meaning of deschooling would be the expansion of pedagogy to encompass social life in its entirety, turning society into a pedagogical “brave new world” (Illich, Deschooling 149).

Six years later Illich claimed to have confirmed his prediction. Experts in education and a new brand of “knowledge capitalists” were joining efforts to promote permanent education. The workplace was no longer the place to be confined after leaving school. Rather, both had become fully integrated. The cost of deschooling had been to become “imprisoned in the global classroom” (Illich and Verne 12).
Illich observed that numerous unemployed intellectuals had been recycled as instructors and course designers at factories, while, at the same time, a number of services provided by intellectuals were now part of a rising knowledge industry. In similar terms, Italian writers such as Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno and Maurizio Lazzarato have analyzed post-Fordism as a moment in which production flees the factory and disperses across society. The factory is now contiguous with society; it becomes a social factory. The whole of society becomes subjected to a mode of capitalist production in which intellectual work is hegemonic. Productivity in the social factory is associated with the capacities for symbolic manipulation of people distributed in space: post-Fordism is the rise of informational cities, symbolic-analytic regions, milieux of innovation, and basins of immaterial labour. Production becomes coextensive with life as community and communication turn into basic resources of productivity. Under these conditions, productive and reproductive labour become almost indistinguishable.

Paolo Virno compellingly argues that post-Fordism puts feelings to work and recruits modes of being that originate outside of the work environment proper (“Ambivalence of Disenchantment” 15). Education plays an integral part in the creation of this productive reality. Rather than correspondence between school and the labour process, considered as two separate structures, the relationship between them increasingly turns into integration (Bowles and Gintis 125-148). Post-Fordist production requires a labour process that is also a learning process, in which living, learning, and producing are coextensive. The inspiration for lifelong learning is clearly not the liberal utopia of unrestricted access to knowledge, but rather the automated bank machine, or even an all-night pharmacy, made possible by incessant re-tooling of the labour force and run on a pay-per-use basis. 35

Nonformal education harnessed the desires expressed in the struggle against disciplinary institutions, wrapping them around what Deleuze defines as a new regime of control that establishes a modulation of selves adjusted to the needs of production (“Postscript on Control Societies”). It has become integrated into the social equipment needed to assemble flexible, mobile and competitive workers, whose most important determinations are really the fear of exclusion and unemployment (Aronowitz and De Fazio).
Precariousness, the nightmare that reminds every worker to remain competitive, is an effective means to discipline individuals into the lifelong learning project of post-Fordism. The unemployed under post-Fordist conditions are not comparable to the “industrial reserve army” of earlier modes of capitalist production. The difference is not quantitative but qualitative. As Virno argues, all wage labour reveals itself as non-necessary, as an excessive social cost (Grammar 102). The flexible worker pursues knowledge because she is forced to develop a concern for her own employability.

What the pedagogization of society makes permanent is the superiority of those who know over those who don’t. In Deschooling Society, Illich had argued that the concept of childhood was sustained by the existence of compulsory learning institutions (42). The segregation of people into children and adults was a necessary strategy to subordinate the former to the schoolmaster’s authority. Permanent education goes beyond this by instituting the puerilization of adulthood and seeking to convince people about their permanent incompetence (Illich and Verne 14). Adulthood has become “an object of pedagogical attention,” while “the ‘job of being a pupil’ [is] the only secure occupation throughout life, particularly at times when people have no other employment” (15). Illich and Verne argued that the institutions of informal education that have appeared in the recent decades have nothing to do with real deschooling. Deschooling can only exist as multiple unmediated encounters between what individuals desire to learn and the thing they desire to learn. The only evidence of real deschooling is not to be found in lifelong learning, nonformal education or other forms of socializing the classroom, but in the different forms of exodus from both educational institutions and permanent education programmes: dropping out, absenteeism, and refusal of work (Illich and Verne 16).

Permanent education does not reproduce the citizen. Virno argues that in post-Fordist capitalism “what really counts is the original sharing of linguistic-cognitive talents, since it is this sharing which guarantees readiness, adaptability, etc., in reacting to innovation.” But, while the rational and knowledgeable citizen of the nation-state era presupposed a political idea of the many—the public sphere of the state—the “generic cognitive and linguistic” talents of people socialized for post-Fordist jobs do “not become a political community or a constitutional principle” (Virno, Grammar 41). Education no longer produces citizens as much as it does workers and consumers.
Ignacio Lewkowicz and Mariana Cantarelli have analyzed the exhaustion of the capacity of the nation-state to function as a pan- or meta-institution, capable of articulating experiences in common. During the last two decades the capacity of that state to act as the foundation of the social bond has been challenged by the market. In the presence of the decomposition of the state as a totality, the market becomes the dominant practice. In the formation of neoliberal societies, the passage from the state to the global market is not a change of paradigms, but an “essential alteration in the modes of organization” (Lewkowicz and Cantarelli 37). The crisis of the state is also the crisis of the subjective figure that inhabits it: the citizen. It is the crisis of a specific type of social bond, an exhaustion of the specific types of practical and discursive mechanisms whose ensemble had the consistency of a certain logic, a certain universe of meaning that provided orientation to the agents that were part of it. The logic of the state as meta-institution vanishes because the meaning that emanated from its dispositifs no longer provides orientation to the agents who inhabit it. The old dispositifs become incapable of providing useful ways of making sense of the new terrain.36

As the market becomes a dominant practice, state institutions do not cease to exist, but they no longer are what they used to be. Reduced to its administrative and punitive effects, the state in consensual democracies has become an administrative structure whose problems are technical in nature. In an era in which politics recedes into policy and becomes the management of the apportionment of spaces, roles and functions, the expert replaces the politician.

Colectivo Situaciones has made the case that the mediation of the expert is justified by an ideology of complexity. The world presents itself as a complex reality that would be transparent only to those equipped with specialized technical knowledges about how societies work. In contrast to the politician, who applies his knowledge of political sovereignty in the sphere of the state—the result of the totalizing count of the citizenry—the “expert” is the person constituted by a totalization that has become autonomous from any count of citizens, a practice “that has radically gained independence from the control of the institutions in charge of regulating it to the point it has become a true process of domination ‘without a subject’” (19 y 20 168). The idea that there is a model of knowledge (economic, scientific, technical, administrative, etc., but also ecological,
social, psychological, etc.) to which the expert has privileged access lays beneath the pedagogization of societies in which complexity becomes the alibi to renounce action for emancipation. As Colectivo Situaciones points out, the problem is not whether this complexity exists, but how it operates creating a spectacular scenario that leads to passivity (19 y 20 168). Complexity is an illusion insofar as it presents the vision of a certain capacity of knowledge to determine the needs of society.

A critique of the ideology of complexity that underlays the figure of the expert must not be understood as an option for simplification or for any of the various determinisms. On the contrary, to recognize complexity is the only way to acknowledge the multiplicity of reality that the experts deny when they act guided by models for which there are no opaque regions (Benasayag and Sztulwark 122-24).

Antipedagogy recognizes complexity, but does not use it as an orientation for action. It takes distance from the imaginary of complexity that results from conceiving the world as a single situation and, instead, supports actions that are restricted to the situation. Rather than aspiring to a knowledge that orders the complexity, antipedagogy focuses on the thought that emerges from the situation. It assumes a militant position of ignorance by recognizing that doubt is the motor of thought. Situational thought, in this sense, coincides with suspending knowledge. It is thought liberated from a finality that transcends the situation, proud to generate knowledge that challenges the utilitarian determinations of the state and the market (Colectivo Situaciones, Conocimiento Inútil).

Pedagogy, both disciplinary and post-disciplinary, presents conscious reason as the limit of all experience. Antipedagogy takes the position that thought is more than reason. In this sense, it looks for a form of reason that does not come before existence, a reason that cannot think without the body. Along with Spinoza, the radical ignorance of antipedagogy only knows that nobody knows what a body can do.

**Pedagogy as Emancipation: The Paradox of Policing Equality**

Ever since the enlightenment, education has been summoned to serve the cause of emancipation, both individual and social. The paradox of the modern republic is that only a society in which everyone is in possession of the *logos* could emancipate itself; that is, the journeys of individual liberations presuppose a vision of the society as One. Thus,
individual progress could be conjugated with the progress of the community considered as a whole.

In the name of social progress the modern educational apparatus has sought to cast the light of knowledge on the darkness that inhabits the minds of the ignorant, a development conceived in terms of advancing both equality and freedom. The universal diffusion of knowledge was the instrument to level the inequalities of intelligence. A belief underlying social enlightenment—in the name of which the reduction of inequalities of intelligence of individuals was effected—is that, although not all individuals are equally rational, a rational society is indeed possible. Key to the progressive outlook is the belief that although not all individuals are equal, society can be equal. The problem with this belief is not whether difference and equality are compatible or incompatible. It is rather the global perspective that, by conceiving society as a single situation, activates the moral vision of the world and thus the figure of the master-liberator.

For the modern humanist progressive tradition, a free and equal society cannot be achieved without the education of those who would otherwise be abandoned to their own ignorance and would become susceptible to superstition and ideology. The plebeians’ lag with respect to those who are more capable in the use of reason prevents them from knowing and exercising their rights and duties. To this tradition, the consequences of the inequality of intelligence are evident and need to be acted upon.

The state, as the representative of the common good, advised by those citizens who are best qualified and prepared in the use of reason, steps up to take upon itself the responsibility of leading through the path of learning those members of the people whose intellectual abilities lack development. Behind this view, advanced by the most progressive propounders of liberal thought and democratic socialism, dwelled the hope that pedagogization would one day make society equal by eliminating, or at least reducing to acceptable levels, the inequalities of intelligence. Modern progressive thinkers and statesmen were convinced that a widespread pedagogical intervention was the commonsense way of attaining the society based in equalitarian principles that would one day replace the existing hierarchy between the elites and their ‘others’.
This classical form of pedagogical intervention has always presupposed, as Jacques Rancière suggests, that the inequality of intelligences is the foundation of society, a problem whose solution is the delivery of instruction (Ignorant Schoolmaster 33-39). If those who lack instruction become more educated, the collective intelligence of society will one day be levelled and the irrationalities of society eliminated, the argument goes. This is, in the doctrine of liberal republicanism, how a true democracy can arise: if each individual is prepared to the best of her potential in the use of reason and has unrestricted access to information, it follows that she will be able to make rational choices according to her interests, and to exercise those interests with the moderation made possible by unrestrained communication with other individuals. Education was set off to produce the citizenry under the assumption that a widespread ability in the use of reason would guarantee the inclusion of everyone in the process and that it would even become a vital component of the necessary critique of domination.

Instruction thus became the order of the day of progressive policy-makers, the royal road to human progress and to the emancipation of both individuals and societies. In the liberal progressivist view, equality has always been a condition to be achieved in a future that is always slipping away. No matter how much instruction, how much research invested in it, or how much money flows into education, the inequality of intelligences is always under discussion when it comes to explaining the poor condition of liberal democracies or the backwardness of the economy. For the sake of freedom and equality, instruction has infinitely extended across society, into the life of each citizen, and into the time formerly consigned to leisure. In the name of undoing inequality, the requirement of educational credentials has relentlessly increased since the establishment of compulsory education, establishing new forms of ignorance and new ways of curing society from it.

The modern extension of instruction came about alongside a new relation between power and life that formed the basis for support of a historical shift in the concept of sovereign power. As Foucault argues, before this transformation took place, sovereign power was exercised as a power to take life or let live (History of Sexuality 133ss). The sovereign enjoyed the right to appropriate and capture everything his subjects possessed, including their lives. In the transition to modernity, this form of sovereign power moves to a secondary plane and a new form comes to the fore, a positive power that seeks to
enhance life, to expand and multiply it. Its goal is to make it flourish in orderly ways. Biopower, as Foucault calls it, pursues the administration of life rather than its destruction. It protects and fosters the lives of entire populations both regarded statistically, with the development of concerns about education, health, housing, migration, etc., and as individuals. Disciplinary institutions appear with the policies that seek to administer the lives of whole populations acting directly on the capacities of each individual. Biopolitics creates useful and docile bodies on a massive scale. It implies a passage from the discrete and exemplary exercise of sovereignty, to a continuous and meticulous rule that distributes bodies, defines their visibility or invisibility, and harmonizes their ways of being, doing, and communicating.38

Mass public education arises from biopolitical concerns that cannot be separated from the need for skilled and disciplined workers opened by factory production. But it is not in the name of the needs of capitalists or of capitalist accumulation that education becomes a concern of the state. Mass education arrives with a promise of well being for the entire population. The techniques that educate each body to work and behave according to the established order, the institutions that sanction the system that sorts out the labour force naturalizing the division of labour and the distribution of wealth, are instituted in the name of the well being of the entire population. Schooling became a key biopolitical instrument in harmonizing the expansion of capitalist relations. From the European colonies in Asia and Africa to the newly independent nations of Latin America, to the American frontier, the educational system helped engineer entire populations. It helped sustain the nation-building process and capitalist development, as Carnoy argues, and it constituted a field of visibility where conflicts and anxieties are resolved in an orderly manner by parts of society whose roles are clearly defined.

The institution of compulsory education thus becomes a tool for the manufacture of the subjective conditions for capitalism. Education creates enclosures—passages and fences—which both force people to participate in living conditions in which selling their labour power is a requirement and which provide norms to organize the relations with others embracing the same conditions. Education establishes a configuration of the social space that defines an order of bodies, modes of being, doing, and saying. It institutes a topology whose running thread is the hierarchy of intelligence. Once the particular
configuration of biopower it introduces takes roots, education becomes a “need” and school the means to deliver the solution.

The same concern with the governance of populations that gave rise to political economy toward the end of the eighteenth century is the one that places the law of scarcity at its foundation. Scarcity is a technical assumption whose premise is that the wants of human beings are always in excess in relation to the means available to satisfy them. It defines *homo oeconomicus* in terms of the desire to escape death. Fostering the lives of populations becomes tied to a notion of represented needs (Foucault, *Order of Things* 253-262).

There has always been a communal, situated form of scarcity, a rule of necessity that each community interprets in its own different idiom. Needs, in this sense, are inherent to life in the local community and have the multidimensional plasticity of desire (Illich, “Needs” 88). From the point of view of the situation, there is no “scarcity” but “scarcities”. What is proper to capitalism—and state socialism for that matter—is the abstract concept of needs that results from conceiving the world as a single situation and reducing all motivations of life to the economic. In these terms the struggle against scarcity ceases to be a struggle for emancipation from necessity and, as Miguel Benasayag suggests, becomes the management of scarcity abstractly defined (*Pensar la libertad* 198). Scarcity becomes a form of organization and distribution that starts from a vision of society to move on to the discovery of needs, prescription of cures for those needs, and establishment of who the needy are. The discourse of scarcity cannot be separated from the predetermined ends that the political sphere prescribes as the destiny of society. Scarcity appears only when a project for overcoming it is put forward. The capitalist logic of economic objectivity is the rule of necessity. The business of managing scarcity—“objective,” and therefore “serious”—reduces politics as struggle for freedom and justice to the impotent conflation of politics with policy-making and to the realist acceptance that all that can be done is the administration of what there is.

The elimination of ignorance is, for the trans-situational utopia of an equalitarian rational society, what the selection of useful knowledges is for the trans-situational perspective of a society without scarcity. Both define regimes of exclusion or, what is the same, conditions for admission within, respectively, the sphere of those represented by
the state (inclusion as citizen) and the capitalist market (inclusion as a subject of needs which are to be satisfied in the form of commodities; therefore, inclusion also as a person who needs to sell labour power in order to satisfy those needs). The perspective of society as One establishes what constitutes useful knowledge—those knowledges that have exchange value—at the social scale decided by the market. The abstract equivalence that makes knowledge exchangeable and decidable by economic planners, development experts, and “human resources” technocrats makes it possible to measure its usefulness.

The scarcity assumption organizes the entire knowledge field: as Prakash and Esteva suggest, the modern concept of education is designed to structurally “exclude all other cosmovisions, except that of *homo oeconomicus* or *homo educandus*” (82). The utility of certain knowledges, the behavioural traits of those who possess them, properly certified by schools, colleges, and universities and instituted by career paths, act as forms of repression, devaluation, or reduction of those knowledges whose usefulness has not been sanctioned by the state or the market. The logic of scarcity organizes the field of vision, casting light on what deserves to be learned and the knowledges that have to be systematized. Knowledges that are not visible fall under a shadow cone and sometimes resurface as forms of resistance that express a multiplicity negated by “the tyranny of globalising discourses” (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 83).

Illich notes how the conception of education as fulfilling a need generates the need to consume education. The modern school is one of those institutions that create needs which define new forms of poverty through their continuous and sustained undevelopment of commons, of forms of self- and community reliance. Schooling confuses teaching—the institutionalized and ritualized form of the satisfaction of a “need”—with learning—the concrete form in which each person knows (Illich, *Deschooling Society* 3-4).

Modern conservative politicians have sought to ensure that education produces the right skills and dispositions toward work. Starting from the principle that intelligence is unequally distributed, they have regarded education as a neutral source of skills, which mark the beginning of a meritocratic path that leads to either success or failure, depending on the capacities and choices of each individual. Progressive politicians have stood on the side of a promise of equal opportunity, without questioning the foundation of education
on utilitarian principles, but instead seeking to build social equality on top of those principles, ensuring access to education for those excluded from it. The progressive education reformer wants to achieve equality of opportunity and thus narrow the gap between rich and poor, women and men, the predominant ethnic groups and the marginal ones, to which he adds concerns about the adequate integration of the individual to society and about their psychic and moral development.  

**Equality, Politics, and Police**

More than a particular form of power, biopolitics defines a terrain within which resistances are once and again turned against themselves, renewing the technologies of power that seek to correct and to regulate them. One case of this has been the struggles for the incorporation to the different levels of the educational system of those excluded from them (workers, women, ethnic groups). Another case has had those included in the system as protagonists: the struggles against disciplinary forms by students, parents, and teachers have pushed the re-definition of education, forcing the latter to undo its most repulsive hierarchies.

Ever since education became part of the concerns of sovereign power with fostering life, the possibilities of an emancipatory politics were defined as playing the right move in a game in which the basic rules are solidly established. In particular the rule that establishes pedagogy as a relation in which a) somebody knows more of something than somebody else, and b) the first person emancipates the second in the act of communicating his superior knowledge. In this game, the players are those who govern the state and those who assist them in such a task; the board is society or the sphere of “the social,” defined as a field of governmental intervention which emerged in response to the potentially explosive combination that appeared when, as citizens, people were given sovereignty at the ballot box, while they remained subjugated at the office or the factory (Donzelot 171). The solution to this paradox was found in the re-formulation of the state as the realm of political action, separated from society and in charge of overseeing the latter’s progress, identifying those members of society who face greater risks, and mobilizing social solidarity in order to reduce inequality.

As Foucault points out, the convergence of the language of rights with the language of needs, the combination of the city-citizen game with the shepherd-flock
game, resulted in the formulation of the modern doctrines of governmental rationality ("Omnes et Singulatim"). Modern progressivism conceived civic education, the production of the collective bond based on the principle of common good, as an antidote to the utilitarian, biopolitical function of education, whose roots lay in the needs of the community considered as a unity ruled by the state. Seen in this way, both utility and equality—biopolitics and rights—are not as antagonistic as conservatives and progressives are used to think of them: both operate as processes in which equality is entrusted to the mechanisms of government of populations. Foucault traced the emergence of governmental rationality, or governmentality, to the formulation, at the dawn of modernity, of a doctrine of police. Governmentality defines the tendency by which the techniques of government came to absorb the entire "space for political struggle and contestation" ("Governmentality" 103). It is by considering equality as a matter of intervention of governmental rationality that a notion of emancipation through pedagogy became tied to police.

Rancière argues that police, as Foucault defines it, is one of the two heterogeneous logics which define the meaning of being together for human beings and which became confused in the formation of the modern state (Disagreement 28). The logic of police deals with the organization, harmonization of interests, and the counting of men and women as members of a community. It sees to the regulation of society to ensure its happiness, attend to the moral and physical qualities of life, and regulate communication (Foucault, "Omnes et Singulatim 249-50). This logic involves, then, the distribution of places and functions. While biopolitics defines the overall shift to a new modality in the exercise of power, police defines the rationality this modality brings into existence. Police is not a pejorative name, nor should it be identified with the "state apparatus." Rather, it is the implicit law that governs a certain order of bodies. Nor should police be confused with disciplining bodies. Police configures the field of perception, in such way that it includes disciplinary institutions as much as strategies to promote communication and information. It defines the logic under which bodies become visible, how, and where. A police logic can be better than others (e.g., network neutrality is certainly better than immigrant deportations), but it is still police, still heterogeneous to politics.
The other logic—*politics* as such—involve the practices that are guided by the presupposition of the *equality of everyone with everyone* implicit in police and the actual verification of such principle. As Rancière argues, the capacity to obey orders is based in two things: understanding them and understanding that they have to be obeyed (*Disagreement* 16). But such understanding already presupposes the equality of two characters constituted by the hierarchical order: the one who gives the order and the one who obeys it. There is politics whenever the equality that remains presupposed is actualized. By distributing activities, places and functions, police offends politics, whose concern is the actualization of the equality that police only presupposes (Rancière, *Disagreement* 33-4). When somebody refers to politics, but is actually talking about police, he or she negates equality as a political principle and as the quest to verify it.

Common utility and harmony of interests provide the foundation of pedagogy in a logic of police. But emancipation can be based in neither of these goals. There is emancipation only when the principle of equality of everyone with everyone irrupts, disrupting the machines built for the administration of utility and justice. Even when—or, precisely when—the principle of justice seems to be incarnated in democratic forms of administration, the administration of consensus negates equality and freedom. Administration always implies the normalization of a certain idea of justice and liberty and thus the negation of other possible becomings. Emancipation only exists as an act, never as a state or as a certain form of organization or distribution. Equality is a practice; emancipation is the act of performing that practice. People can only embody the principle of equality—that is, they can only act politically—when they verify equality in practice (Rancière, *Disagreement* 16-9; Benasayag and Sztulwark 44-54). That is why *nothing*—institution, group of people or things—is intrinsically political.

Politics cannot eliminate police, nor should that be its goal. When police saturates politics and leaves no space to make it possible, what we have is a society in which “representation and the spectacle have taken the place of the real, eradicating it” (Benasayag and Sztulwark 49). But if those who desire to act in the name of politics are not ready to defend a form of police at a certain moment, they risk falling into one or another form of sterile ultraleftism. An emancipatory politics—one that neither confuses politics with police nor asphyxiates one or the other—recognizes that police is only a
specular reflection of politics and regards the latter as an expression of those who do not have a part in the existing game of police. On the other hand, to expect radical changes coming from police “is more or less the same as asking our image reflected in a mirror to lose weight for us” (Benasayag and Sztulwark 52).

Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed is a call to political action, and not a treatise on police, not only because it seeks to include those who, in a given law of distribution of bodies, appear invisible within a pedagogical relation that would only perpetuate their subordinate position, but, fundamentally, because it seeks also to undo the relation as it is configured. However, any appropriation of the “Freire method” that is used in a business training course, a university graduate seminar, or a computer-based learning application belongs to the terrain of police. Seymour Papert, for instance, claims that his vision of the computer as an educational tool resembles some of the “philosophical principles expressed in the diverse forms of innovations that go under such names as progressive or open or child-centered or constructionist or radical education” (14). Something similar can be said about Latin American “left-wing” governments using the “method” in literacy campaigns that seek to expand the capacities of those excluded from the labour market.42 The view that proclaims that education is a human right belongs to police, and therefore negates emancipation, because, even when it is genuinely grounded in principles of freedom and equality, it operates within an administrative perspective of organization and distribution of human needs constructed on the basis of the law of scarcity (Esteva and Prakash 23-7).43

We are still inside the game of police when the distinction between politics and police is not clear. A political struggle is a demand for equality that cannot be satisfied by the apportionment of spaces, discourses, and activities registered by police. It is indiscernible from the point of view of knowledge.

Politics, in the sense of disruption of the order of police, does not imply violence (although it is not opposite to violence either). Rather, it relates to the emergence of a new regime of visibility and to the institution of subjects that do not coincide with the parts in which society is divided. Politics institutes agents who do what they are not supposed to do.
The political disruption of police can take, for instance, the form of the phenomenon that, in Argentina, Franco Ingessia calls the "third university." In the period between the last dictatorship and the accelerated neoliberal reform of the 1990s, public universities constituted separate spaces, Ivory Towers coded as elite spaces (even though, formally, anyone who finished high-school could attend them without paying or taking an exam). University politics was confined to that separate space. The struggles concerned the educational policies that allocated the use of time, resources, and administrative spaces, conferring a particular meaning to the experience of being a student, a professor, or a staff member. The conditions under which politics took place had been set. Politics took place as expansion of spaces of power within the institution, as struggles over the meaning of the production of knowledge and over the general directions of research. The student left sought to open the university to society, but from a perspective that maintained the university as the place of "those who know." The second perspective maintains the separate status of the university, but at the same time establishes a line of communication with the market. The communication is not homogeneous: departments that directly contribute to the valorization of capital (computer science, biology, engineering, business) are not treated the same way as the humanities. Traditional forms of student politics, in the context of this perspective, never abandon the logic of police: theirs is a sterile dispute over assigned spaces of representation. The third perspective appears as a response to the paralysis and futility of the available politics in the neoliberal university. It exists as nomadic, fragmentary practices subtracted from the types of exchanges administered by the state and the market. On the other hand, it establishes compositions with groups outside the university that have also escaped those norms. These initiatives are not guided by a particular ideology but rather by pure subjective invention.44

Certain elements of the wave of student struggles that gained momentum by the end of the 1960s were an open defiance to police. Politics appears when a group affirms its equality, something that at the moment, as the Parisian students understood, amounted to demanding the impossible. From the point of view of police, politics seemed absurd, a "utopian" demand posed by bohemians. The end of the elite monopoly of access to higher education since the end of World War II had occurred within a context of disciplinary
regimentation and subordination to nationally defined goals for the generation of the "human capital" required by the Fordist model of mass production and mass consumption. Many students felt their lives had been reduced to the emotional poverty of being spectators and consumers. On this point, Daniel and Gabriel Cohn Bendit noted that mass education aimed at producing the type of intellectuals needed for the reproduction of qualified labour power, without giving students anything of real value. The reformist left only raised questions regarding the class composition of the university, arguing that its democratization would be guaranteed by expanding access to the working class, and not posing any critique to the social function of the university as a centre to manufacture the ruling technocracies (Cohn Bendit and Cohn Bendit 40; Lyotard, Political Writings 41-45). Similar feelings were shared by the U.C. Berkeley students who gave rise to the Free Speech Movement in 1964; by the Argentinean students who rose against the Onganía dictatorship, to be repressed in “the night of the long batons;” and by many others around the world, from Mexico to Germany, from Italy to Japan.

The most visionary minds on the side of police realized that it was necessary to make some concessions to dissipate the revolt. Among them was Charles Silberman, editor of Forbes magazine and director of the Carnegie Study of the Education of Educators, whose report on the sources of unrest in American educational institutions was to become an influential resource in the years to come. Silberman was fascinated by the widespread experimentation with a variety of educational forms and methods since the early sixties in both Europe and the United States. In his book Crisis in the Classroom he called for a more humane school, “genuinely concerned with gaiety and joy and individual growth and fulfillment without sacrificing concern for intellectual discipline and development” (208). A school addressing those needs would have to be centred in both knowledge and the learner’s genuine needs. It would require abandoning the monolithic model that students are refusing and switch to a mode of open education, in which learning grows from the interest of the learner. Teacher authority does not need to change. All that was needed was a shift from direct monitoring of behaviour to structuring the environment in which learning takes place according to the changing needs and interests of the learner. Silberman’s ideal of informal school does not draw a line to distinguish work from play. Instead, the classroom situation is built on the
assumption that “play is a child’s work” (237). But play has to take place before the eyes of the teacher, who ensures that playful activity gradually leads towards more structured activity. In this model, teachers are responsible for creating an environment that stimulates curiosity, but which also helps build up those forms of curiosity that are considered the most relevant. The teacher is not the source of learning but a facilitator. It is neither the kind of information transmitted nor the enthusiasm they generate, but the quality of relationships established with learners what matters to teachers. Their work with children consists in “getting relationships right,” understanding each child individually. For this reason, teachers are granted autonomy from administrators and expected to take their own decisions.

The emergence of students as political subjects dethroned the significations that sustained the regimented classroom at the same time that working class struggles had succeeded in upsetting Fordist discipline in the factory. Police did not become emancipatory by admitting greater creative possibilities and more room for student experimentation; it only changed to admit flexibility in the classroom under the perception that students would continue to work in producing themselves as useful human resources. Claiming to be flexible, participatory, multicultural, and inclusive, education continued to have as its effects the production of skilled workers for the post-Fordist economy. As George Caffentzis argues, already in those Cold War times capital was more concerned about refusal of schoolwork and dropping out, than about people learning how to read Marxist literature. For it is not by complying with police, progressive or not, that students become political subjects. They become subjects only when they actualize the full meaning of the equality that progressive police in education both implicitly affirms but explicitly denies.

Whenever it is carried out through administrative apparatuses, the pursuit of equality acquires an absolute value that homogenizes difference. It thus prevents the emergence of the singularities that constitute political subjects; i.e. subjects who become such in struggles for equality, which necessarily need to confront the system of command and administration that police cannot avoid in order to function efficiently. Pedagogy is always within police. Reforms that seek to make pedagogy emancipatory only succeed in introducing changes of police. Emancipation occurs only as an action against the order.
that police secures. Emancipation, and particularly intellectual emancipation, is heterogeneous to pedagogy: it can only take the form of an antipedagogy, a position that actualizes the equality of intelligences that pedagogy denies.

The paradox of an emancipatory pedagogy derives from the impossibility of a coherent combination of the two processes that are understood as politics: while police seeks to pedagogically enhance the lives of the population and to level the intellectual inequality, the verification of equality—the defining principle of politics—only occurs by cancelling the founding assumption of the pedagogical order: the inequality of intelligences. This proof of equality can only happen singularly and does not admit the view of the collective as One on which police is based.

The Inequality of Intelligences

Rancière argues that emancipation and progress entered a collision course when the latter ceased to be the product of restless quests by singular persons and groups that caused distortions in the established order of traditions to become the cause of nation-states (Ignorant Schoolmaster 118). Turned into representation of the collective bond under slogans such as “civilization or barbarism,” progress sutured every possible meaning and foreclosed the multiple becomings of intellectual quests by inscribing them under the fiction of the nation-state. Pedagogy thus became a way of bonding the social order, organized from the micro level of day-to-day explications to the macro-level of state strategies. Moral totalizations of meaning institute a hierarchy whose poles are good and evil, which progress reinscribed in terms of after and before. Social progress is the idea that a society, a people, a nation as a whole can be perfected. But to speak of the progress of the nation-state is also a way of forgetting that such unity is a fiction; it is the result of counting a multiplicity as One. The inevitable consequence of the grand narrative of progress is the establishment of a hierarchy under the guise of evolution.

In other words, progress was on the side of social change when it consisted of multiple singular acts of exploration, each of them, in its own way, at odds with the existing social consensus. But it became part of police, a form of regulation of the social homeostasis, when it became a myth intertwined with pedagogy’s own myth. As Rancière puts it, “progress is the pedagogical fiction built into the fiction of the society as a whole” (Ignorant Schoolmaster 119). In the “age of progress,” pedagogy—whose ontogenetic
view of individual development is based in the supposition that intelligences are unequal—came to agree with the notion that the social order progresses—a phylogenetic view of perfecting entire societies that presupposes that the intellectual inferiority of the majority is a decisive obstacle to the construction of a fully rational society in which all equally participate in the community of knowledge.

Several institutions were enlisted to inscribe progress into the social fabric. Tony Bennet has studied how this was a mission built into the museum. The inscription of time into urban space through exhibitions and other 19th century urban projects was analyzed by Walter Benjamin for his Arcades Project (Buck-Morss). But only formal education was able to bring each individual body to a meticulous ritualization of progress, instituting new values and images of happiness (Illich, Deschooling 49-74).

Progressives took the presupposition of intellectual inequality that is part of every pedagogy and expanded it to the entire society: the student is to the teacher what the people are to its enlightened elite. When the inequality of knowledge is conceived as a gap between different intellectual capacities that institutions can act upon, the gap thus constructed is not meant to be closed. The intellectual gap becomes the vantage point from where the progress of society is measured and from where the ignorant receive education. In this sense, enlightenment is the ever-increasing perfection of the order of explication.

It is possible to perfect the regime of explication, but not to eliminate it. As progressives elaborate more pedagogies for emancipation they only succeed in extending the virtuous circle, expanding in the process the number of explicators, explications, and experts of all kinds. Because it always reproduces the inferiority of those excluded from what the consensus defines as knowledge, the institutionalization of pedagogy has, regardless of its content and form, an essentially conservative function. Under the sign of progress, the vantage point of the inequality of intelligence constructs the uninstructed as victims who “can be manipulated for their own good” (Illich, Deschooling 69). Who would think that without pedagogy they would be able, or even willing, to escape from the evils of unenlightenment, irrationality, and undevelopment?

In a pedagogicized society the inequality of intelligences is always reinvented because it is taken as the point of departure. The operation that starts from the “evidence”
of inequality is the same that "forgets" the process through which it becomes an autonomous, self-sufficient view of the world. Inequality appears as a result, the effect of a measurement applied to the collective counted as One, ignoring the fictional procedure involved in constituting the unity, and therefore ignoring also the exclusions and inclusions it practices as the result of its own operation. The evidence on intellectual inequality is abundant. After all, the IQ tests show that all intelligences are different (Bowles and Gintis 105). But, as Rancière suggests, there are problems with how evident is the evidence.

Historically, there have been two main forms of establishing the inequality of intelligence, one focuses on "matter," the other on "spirit" (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 46-9). Those devoted to the hard evidence of matter have concentrated their attention on physiological features of the human brain. From nineteenth-century phrenology to contemporary neurobiology, different sciences have specialized in weighting brains, measuring skulls and inspecting neurons. All attempts to define the superiority of a particular set of protuberances in the skull, a given shape in the lobules of the brain, or even more refined forms of hard-wiring that can be used to represent different types of intelligence have led to deterministic models. From these models unfolds the authoritarian consequence that superior brains are naturally endowed to take part in the creative and directing functions of society, while the more humble brains have to be content to take care of the routine and manual tasks. As Rancière points out, the biological theories of intellectual inequality are tautological, for if the superiority of certain brains is given, there is no point in proving it to those equipped with a lesser intellect, who would be unable to understand the issues that are at stake. If experimental biology could tell which brain is superior, then it would be completely unnecessary, for those who believe in its capacity to say something about intelligence, to conduct IQ tests, take exams or require university certificates in order to establish who should be in control of institutions or take a particular job.

Fortunately, there are relatively few people today who would sustain that intelligence is determined at birth by a biological configuration. There are, however, some who manage to introduce more subtle forms of "genetic" or "natural" determinism by arguing that, although biological differences of intelligence do not exist today, they
may materialize in the future if, for instance, for the span of a generation, only those living in the affluent regions of the world use computers, while those living in slums are deprived from access to such “intelligent” machines. Saving the latter from this devastating ailment, expressed today in the discourses that victimize the “information poor,” becomes a cause behind which the superior minds among the “information rich” can rally. They seek to convince everyone that leaving the technological gap open might lead to the formation of two human races, biologically different in the hard-wires of their brains.

Most of the people who argue that there is some form of intellectual inequality prefer the “spiritual” approach. They establish an unmeasurable—and thus more elusive—form of superiority of intellects. Those who sustain this argument want to take distance from biological determinism, but, at the same time, are careful not to confront the impossibility of establishing inequality on the basis of something as unmeasurable as the spirit. Intellectual inequality cannot be tied mechanically to social inequality because doing so requires an explanation of why people with the same upbringing are capable of different mental tasks. Intelligences are thus considered unequal because the evidence shows that some succeed more than others. Intelligences measure up differently when placed in front of the same challenges. A whole range of explanations is then directed to find the causes of differences in achievement, from hanging out with the wrong elements of society to the poverty of the habitus cultivated at home. But in the end, this position cannot avoid arguing that some people do better because they are more intelligent, which is almost the same as saying that some intelligences are superior because they are.

In the end, what Rancière argues is that inequality of intelligence can only be postulated as an opinion, intuitively grasped from the observable reality by observers who do not observe themselves carefully. Both “material” and “spiritual” arguments about the inequality of intelligence rely on evidence that discerns, classifies and represents within a totality produced by a subjective operation that is not recognized as such, failing, in this way, to acknowledge the arbitrary character of the evidence they provide.

In this vision of the world, emancipation is not possible, for emancipators would always be reproducing the inequality of intelligences. To challenge this view, Rancière presents the theory of intellectual equality proposed by Joseph Jacotot (1770–1840), a
French revolutionary, artilleryman, and polymath who was forced to live in exile in Belgium. There he made a living teaching French to students who only spoke Flemish. To overcome the language barrier he designed a teaching method in which the intelligence of the master is annulled.

While pedagogy is founded in an axiomatic postulate of inequality, in Jacotot’s antipedagogy, the emancipator only needs to declare equality. But no proof of the equality of intelligences is necessary; it only suffices to see what the consequence would be of accepting the axiom that all intelligences are equal. The emancipator only needs to postulate equality from the outset as a prescription, not as a goal; as a guiding principle, not as something yearned for. It is not the belief that all human beings are equal, but an incarnated declaration of equality that has effects here and now. The only way for the emancipator to honour this prescription is to abandon pedagogy, to become an antipedagogue.

If there is no way of determining intellectual inequality, we have to accept that all intelligences are equal. But then, while proving the weakness of the arguments that sustain the principle of inequality is necessary in order to posit a truly emancipatory perspective, it is also fundamental to answer the question about why people do differently in educational institutions. In other words, if all intelligences are equal, why are we not all magnificent poets, great philosophers or groundbreaking scientists? It is obvious that different people produce different results with the equal intelligence they have, but how can we understand this without falling again into the justifications of inequality and therefore doing away with any emancipatory aspiration? Once the pedagogical presupposition of unequal intelligences is removed, it is no longer possible to argue that a stultified student is less intelligent. We need to turn to the will, to desire, the other faculty of reason.

Jacotot argued that if we agree that the intelligence of all human beings is equal in principle, not everyone demonstrates the same will. What appear to be differences in intelligence are in fact differences of attention, and the persistence of attention depends on the persistence of a certain intensity of each person’s will. Differences in will cause the same intelligence to produce results that are in some cases poor and in others brilliant. A sustained intensity of will keeps the mind attentive, while the weakening of the will
results in distractions that lead the same intelligence to produce poorer works. While all the ways of verifying the difference of intelligence rely on obscure and unverifyible evidence, the presence or absence of attention—the intensity of a will—has material effects that can be corroborated. Stultification begins with the impairment of the will. 47

**Pedagogical Stultification**

Rancière argues that, historically, there have been two models to explain the relation between intelligence and freedom. The model on which pedagogy is based insists on the sovereignty of intelligence. This model assumes the sovereignty of the head over the body. Translated into social organization, it supports the hierarchical figure of a king. In the republican form this model acquired in the modern state, the intelligence of the king is replaced by the sovereignty of language inscribed in institutions, norms, and laws. This model is sociocentric: it understands that knowledge, the result of a collective intelligence, precedes the act of thinking of any individual intelligence. The primacy of knowledge secures the status quo, since any individual search for truth is always subordinated to the aggregation of society as One. In contrast, for the other model, there is emancipated thought when a singular intelligence pierces through the determinations of knowledge. The individual mind encounters its *potentia* not when it is coupled to other minds by means of signs, but when it makes an effort to act autonomously.

In Jacotot’s view, the will acts on intelligence keeping it in focus, maintaining the attention, and restraining it from distraction. The exercise of the will is necessary to overcome laziness and boredom, for intelligence requires repetition. Genious springs from the constancy of an extraordinary will. Will is also necessary in the active embodiment of the principle of equality, in order to prevent an intelligence from forgetting that its products are the results of persistence, not of its intellectual superiority. The strength and weakness of the will depend on circumstances of life, on how each person is affected by his or her own existential conditions, including the conditions imposed by the relation to a pedagogue (Rancière, *Ignorant Schoolmaster* 50-1).

It is, then, possible to conceive an alternative view, which profoundly alters the assumption that the head commands over the body. In this view, the relation between will and intelligence goes in one direction: will commands over intelligence. There is no such a thing as a sovereign intelligence commanding over the will. Any reason- or intelligence-
centred definition of person needs to be abandoned. Rather, what Jacotot proposes is to redefine the human being as “a will served by an intelligence” (Ignorant Schoomaster 51-2).

In this sense, Jacotot remained close to Spinoza’s materialism, for which the fundamental difference between the ignorant and the knowledgeable person, the weak and the strong, the free person and the slave is that all of them will differently. What defines the free and strong is that they are in possession of their potentia, have adequate ideas, and active affections. The slave and the weak, on the other hand, are subjected to passive affections, which derive from inadequate ideas, and are separated from their potentia (Deleuze, Expressionism 254). Rather than assuming that intelligence is in command, Spinoza recognizes that our humanity expresses itself simultaneously through mind and body. A sovereign intelligence is a mirage, a product of representational imagination.

The relation between freedom and intelligence can be thought about in a different way, which does not translate into a model of social organization—earlier, current or desired—but into an ethical understanding of the world. If this perspective highlights the body, it does so not to devalue theoretical thought in relation to practice, but to devalue the sovereignty of consciousness as a condition of possibility for thought. Thought is always “thinking-doing,” a practice in which the body always participates. This ethical worldview proposes the body as a political model, as the place where we have to look for answers to questions regarding our power to act and to think. Unlike the position that stresses the sovereignty of intelligence, which invariably leads to inequality, the affirmation of potentia—a person’s capacity to appropriate her will—drives us away from the illusory aggregation of reason in the concept of a rational society and toward the particularity of bodies and affects.

Pedagogy is the child of a conception that has always regarded the body as an entity that cannot be trusted, because its appetites distract the mind from acting rationally. In this sense, pedagogy is subservient to the institution of particular forms of taming and disciplining bodies. It is an attempt to colonize the body, to make it obedient to conscious reason by mutilating desire, casting it into manageable shapes that abolish multiplicity, reducing it to being the effect of a sovereign intelligence, united to others through language and communication. Pedagogy presupposes that communication amends the inequalities between the more developed reason of the master—bearer of the transcendent
law of the state—and the more rudimentary one of the student—the citizen-to-be. The presumptions that the master knows, bringing into the relation his superior intelligence, and that his intelligence is what is involved in the communication with the student, bring into existence a relation of domination.

But domination is not limited to belittling a student’s intelligence. On the contrary, a pedagogical relation reaches its point of greatest stultification when it is most communicative and most prone to consensus. In this sense, it is possible to argue that the establishment of different agendas for “free” education within different levels of the educational system at the end of the 1960s was the continuation of discipline by other means. Although they seem to be radically opposed, behaviourists and radical educators complement each other. Since the late 1960s, the pacification of the new generations through controlled freedom has been the other side of the same coin of behaviour measurement and modification. Most of the alternatives offered are only attempts to improve schooled society (Illich, Deschooling Society 96-7). In the 1980s and 1990s, a new round of “democratization” became the dominant theme of multicultural education, an idea that Prakash and Esteva consider to be an oxymoron (15-9).

The basis of this stultification is the impairment of the autonomous will. There cannot be an emancipated relation to truth from a collective standpoint. An ethical relation to truth can only be a personal quest, an eternal and decentred orbiting of desire around the thing it desires, a journey through facts, relations, and words. Jacotot emphasizes that this is an orbit that the emancipated person describes alone, as a singularity. There is emancipation only when this concrete, immanent relation to truth is cultivated.

The superior intelligence, as it appears obvious to the pedagogue, is the one that has to reach down to the level of the inferior one. The more the explicator descends to “the same level” as those people he is instructing, the more participatory, dialogic, and communicative his pedagogy, the more effective the stultification. The more enlightened the master, the more obvious the difference between his capacity and his student’s lack of method, the more stultifying he will be as he tries to redouble the explicatory effort. A verification of whether the master made himself understood follows every explication, only to improve the next explication, so that, at the end of the process, the student
perfectly understands that what she needs is a master. Stultification is successful when the learner learns to distrust her own intelligence and substitutes it by the master's.

This is what Spinoza refers to when he postulates that the true idea is the *adequate* idea. The cause of adequate ideas is not accidental—i.e. separate, global, abstract, consensual—but expressive, immanent. For Spinoza, a person has an adequate—and therefore true—idea if the latter expresses the power to think of that person. This is the *potentia* that that person brings forth in the act of thinking. An adequate idea is one that gives us, in a single breath, knowledge of an object and of ourselves. In contrast, the *inadequate* idea is cut off from its cause, slashed from what it expresses. It deprives us from knowing ourselves and the object. Initially, all our ideas are inadequate. To have adequate ideas, we have to be in possession of our *potentia*, and to get a hold on this power to act is already to have adequate ideas.

None of the affections that strengthen the power of the will derive from inadequate ideas. Since they are always external to us, we relate to inadequate ideas passively. The inadequate idea affects us in such way that our desire remains variable and irrational. All the ideas that come to us in the accidental, external, and separate form of the inadequate idea appear to us as laws we have to obey, as revelations, as signs that seem to tell us what we have to do, in other words, they do not enable an ethics but structure a moral vision (Deleuze, *Expressionism* 283). With its force of abstraction, the inadequate idea reduces *potentiae*, depresses the formation of a will in the situation by separating each of those who inhabit it from their power to think and act.

In this view, what stultifies people—what diminishes their *potentia*—is telling them that they can't learn unless the master explains to them, and there is nothing a knowledgeable master can do about this, except making things worse. In fact, the impairment of the autonomous will is greater when the master and the student are closer, when communication between their intelligences is better and the separation of the student from her own quest is less perceptible to her (Rancière, *Ignorant Schoolmaster* 59). A relation in which knowledge is transmitted from mind to mind, communicated, has always the same result: it produces stultification. No improvement to pedagogy, its methods, rhetorical techniques and technical equipments, can eliminate the relation on
which it is based, which presupposes that intelligence is communicated from one point to another, that a relation to truth is not personal.

The pedagogical order is always ready to deliver new lessons to people on what they cannot do; i.e. to make them aware of their impotence. From the point of view of the master, anyone who wants to learn is a priori powerless. Jacotot argued that, by presenting himself as intellectually superior, the master operates the most pervasive damage to the will coming from education. Education thus surrenders to the relations of contempt toward self and others that exist between isolated individuals (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 79). While emancipation is impossible without the expansion of self-esteem and the esteem for others (what Spinoza understood as joyful passions and love), pedagogy cultivates sadness and individualism as it relies on the comparison of different intelligences. The subjectification of the unlearned victims assumes the general, abstract viewpoint of those who, from the point of view of knowledge, see the uninstructed as inferior: “beneath the pedagogical relation of ignorance to science, the more fundamental philosophical relation of stultification to emancipation must be recognized” (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 14). Undertaking the moral representation of the victims in the name of their future well being, the pedagogue redoubles his effort.

Instead of emancipation, pedagogy begets more pedagogy by instituting its own need and creating compulsive consumers of the services it provides (Illich, Deschooling Society 50). This cycle of impotence is inscribed in the normal functioning of relations in the classroom. The superior knowledge of the master is always slipping away, always coming back to remind the student what she cannot do: “The master is always a length ahead of the student, who always feels that in order to go farther he must have another master, supplementary explications” (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 21). Under the rule of pedagogy, the student continuously swings from an awareness of what she can do to a sense of impotence, as any new thing learned is soon proven to be insufficient. Navigation from book to book, class to class, year to year of instruction, provides only fragments of an always incomplete whole. Other books, classes or years are always added, only to beget more fragments in an endless spiral of impotence. Ignorance is
continuously reinstated because there is always something that is not known and requires a pedagogue.

This cycle would not be activated without the complicity of the student, who once in a while receives accreditations so that she herself can feel superior to somebody else. There is no question that this results in knowledge and credentials. What does not result from this is intellectual emancipation, which requires a stubborn subtraction of the student from the forms of consensus and communication proposed by the pedagogue and the infinite determination of the student’s will to make her intelligence—the equal intelligence we all have—attentive. Nobody would question that pedagogy leads to learning. The virtue of the emancipated intellect, however, is not to be found in what it knows, or how much of it knows, but in its capacity to assert that it is equal to all other intelligences.

Rancière is clearly not interested in whether the capacity to assert the equality of intelligence is given in certain social classes more than in others. This is why he rejects the model that starts by looking at the evidence, which invariably supplies us with proofs of inequality, and, instead, argues that emancipation can take place only when equality is an axiomatic point of departure. The unstated target of this critique is sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the hero of the triumph of sociology amidst the “end of politics” announced by the *nouveaux philosophes* after 1968. The concept of working class habitus is embedded in a logic in which, as Rancière’s translator Kristin Ross points out, “the social critic gains by showing democracy losing” (xi). This logic consists of two propositions: 1) those excluded ignore the reasons of their exclusion; 2) such ignorance is an effect of the system that excludes them. The circle can only be broken by the sociologist/critic, who can claim victory and, in the process, assert his/her right as both pedagogue of the ignorant and eternal denouncer of the institution.

**An Ethics of Ignorance: Subtraction and Composition**

Jacotot elaborated his ideas at the same time as pedagogy was becoming intertwined with the myth of progress. Progressives of all kinds sought to find applications of his method to accelerate the enlightenment of citizens. Numerous pedagogues drew lessons from his method, reformist parties intended to use it to instruct the people, and acolytes perfected versions of it in schools throughout France and
Belgium. Jacotot warned them that the search for pedagogical applications would only impoverish the method to the point of turning equality into its opposite. The presupposition that intelligences are equal, which requires the actual suspension of hierarchies of knowers, is incompatible with the pedagogical distribution of ranks, which is inherently unequal. Moreover, instruction presupposes its usefulness: something has to be taught; it is always legitimated in ulterior needs. The fact that Jacotot’s theory was considered a “method” allowed for its use in any situation. Reinscribed as police, it lost its emancipatory essence, for the verification of equality requires undoing the stability of the distribution of functions and roles.

Not all rulers support instruction for the same reasons, but all of them, from the right to the left, agree on the need for instruction. A people without instruction, they know, cannot be governed, progressively or otherwise. Without at least some instruction, they argue, the ignorant would fall victims of their own brutality, they would not be able to appreciate the superior intellect of their leaders, they would be eternally confined to their lowly status, and the sequence of the training ladder that is supposed to lead to better positions would lose its good name. There is no alternative, no middle ground, between emancipation and stultification. As long as there is instruction, as long as the assumption prevails that something is communicated from the master to the student, there is no content or form that is more progressive than others, because the one lesson to be learned by the emancipated student is that he can learn without a master explicator (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 17-8).

Emancipation is possible only if there is neither subordination nor communication between intelligences. It cannot be the work of master thinkers passing down knowledge, but it can indeed result from the stubborn dedication of an ignorant master. If pedagogy subordinates the intelligence of the student to that of the master, an antipedagogy that truly embraces a project of liberation must start from the opposite presupposition: that liberation needs an ignorant master, or at least someone whose intelligence is left outside the relationship with those who are going to be emancipated (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 13).

Rancière argues that there is another relation, different from the communication between intelligences, which opens possibilities for emancipation: the verification, by an
attentive master, of the will of the student (Ignorant Schoolmaster 65). An ignorant master does not check whether the student has understood his reasoning, but whether the student has *mobilized her will*. He avoids creating the necessity of his own mediation, because all he needs to do is to invest his will in the verification of the result of self-guided research of the student.

To be able to emancipate, a master *can* be ignorant. Moreover, she *must* be. That is the fundamental principle of intellectual emancipation inscribed in the method of universal teaching created by Joseph Jacotot, whose experiments allowed him to discover that anybody, including an illiterate, can emancipate others. Rancière, however, makes clear that, even though Jacotot demonstrated that an ignorant can emancipate, he never stood on the side of anti-intellectualist arguments that identify ignorance with a source of wisdom. Jacotot called his method “universal teaching” because it allowed anybody to emancipate anyone in the process of teaching anything. The only requirement to emancipate someone is to establish a connection from will to will.

The single bond that matters to antipedagogy is the one between will and will which, instead of a stultifying relation through communication, cultivates a circle of power—indeed, a circle of *potentia*. The verification of will is not a test of the student’s intellectual ability. What the emancipatory master does is to inquire not whether she knows, but whether she paid attention to her self-guided search. If her will is strong, she has no reason to abandon herself to laziness, nor does she require a magisterial explication.

Since the distracted will is given to sad passions, the task of the emancipator is to always find the paths to *potentia*. The ignorant master’s only duty is to verify that the student pays attention to her own exploration, that what she talks are constructions made from the symbolic material present in the book she is exploring. Not even reading skills are necessary for that. What is fundamental in any emancipatory process, however, is that the student learns that she has the same intelligence as any other human being. And this is something that *only an ignorant master* can do without error.

Jacotot considered the progressive pedagogue to be the greatest stultifier because, after decreeing inequality as the point of departure of his approach, he seeks to collaborate with the student in the consensual elaboration of his participatory method.
Between equals, reason cannot be bound to speech. Truth cannot be communicated by linguistic or symbolic means of any sort. Language—be it spoken or written, broadcast or digitalized—does not guarantee the presence of reason. Because consensus suppresses the personal, immanent relation to truth by diverting it toward a trans-personal, discursive relation, there is emancipation only when the student subtracts herself from the consensus and verifies that she is equal, for equality does not exist outside the act of its verification.

The subtraction from communication does not eliminate the use of language. It only removes the latter as a bond between intelligences. Jacotot suggested that this problem could be conceived in terms of translation and counter translation. When two people reason together, they have no other choice but to rely on language, a means that is both imperfect and arbitrary. But the act of communication need not be understood as a passage of reason from one person to another, for what each person does is to translate the other’s thought to her own thinking (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 62). The effort of constantly translating thoughts into words and words into thought, from one person to the other, is presided by the will of each of them and guided by the desire to understand and be understood. Words acquire meaning only when somebody applies to them a will to understand.

What suppresses rationality in communication is the binding of intelligences into an aggregate unity. This is very different from a union built around the verification of the action performed by the student. Of course, the student has to use language to tell what she is doing and allow somebody to verify her action with his senses. The difference is that while communication annihilates the distance between the two intelligences, in translation and countertranslation both the ignorant master and the student maintain an equal distance to the object the student is acting upon with her intelligence. Translation and countertranslation establish a connection between desire and desire, an emancipatory link built on potentia that—following Spinoza—we can call composition.

While pedagogical explication institutes a relation to inadequate ideas, translation and countertranslation produce adequate ideas by building common notions between the master and the student. Only between people who act from ignorance, searching together, starting from the same ground of desire, is it possible to have notions in common. Composition does not proceed, as Spinoza shows, from the most abstract and
general notions, but rather from the most particular, local, and concrete ones. It is a relation built on a ground of immanent rules.

Both the advocates of traditional instruction and the modern experts in participative pedagogical methods negate the possibility of the single method that is common to all human beings and available to everyone, the only method that unreservedly agrees with human dignity: learning by oneself, in the same way we learn our mother tongue, the very same method that is blocked by pedagogical explications. Emancipation takes place when the student embraces the unregulated possibilities of her own pursuit of truth, her own personal translations of other peoples’ truths, developing, in the process, adequate ideas that expand her power to think and act. The ignorant master’s only task is to make sure that the student has translated somebody else’s thought into her own creations.

Jacotot believed that an emancipator should stay away from any concern about what students must learn. They must learn what they want. And if nothing is what they want to learn, so be it. Learning by oneself emancipates because it is exploration not driven by guilt, sense of duty, or even an altruistic ideal. It is only understandable as enraptured desire. Desire that sometimes succeeds in affirming itself, other times is negated, but is always transformed by the circumstances it encounters and follows a path that cannot be anticipated.

In the effort of translation and countertranslation we verify our mutual equality. This is the principle on the basis of which an artist—say, a poet—establishes, through his works, a connection with others, a connection that presupposes equality of thought and which forces others to translate somebody else’s expression of feelings into their own. Jacotot used one book that he asked his students to memorize and repeat. That was the tool he used to make possible the verification of the equality of intelligence. He only had to make sure that the students paid attention, translated the book to their own language, and continued their research remaining attentive to their own singular paths. The mortal sin was distraction, the capitulation of the will of those who, nonetheless, continued to participate equally in the power of intelligence common to all human beings (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 32).
A learned master does not emancipate because he cannot reveal an intelligence to itself. His interrogations can guide through learning, but not through emancipation, because they continuously remind the student of her powerlessness. The ignorant master, on the other hand, poses questions from a position of ignorance. His questions come from someone who does not know; they are true questions, of the kind that interrogate in order to know (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 29-30). The ignorant master is not interested in verifying what the student finds, but in verifying the fact that she has investigated. Both emancipator and student bring into play the power of intelligence as such, without establishing a hierarchy between the two intelligences.

Learned or not, there is one thing that emancipators must not ignore: they are just as intelligent as anybody else is. They need to know that to emancipate someone, they must, first of all, know themselves. They cannot ignore that they are equal participants in the common power to think, which is not an attribute of the mind but of humanity. Common power to think does not mean that we all have the same potential, because in that case intelligence would still be divided between levels, one belonging to manual labour and another to intellectual labour, one applied to making crafts and another to abstract thinking, science and philosophy. Rather, it means that the same intelligence is applied to all human creations.

Intellectual emancipation is an act of verification of equality that requires two steps: subtraction from consensus and composition of wills. The ground that makes such verification possible is the equality of all human intelligences. What kind of equality is this? How can it be verified? The type of equality that appears in the circulation of commodities is quantitative, established on the basis how much value (abstract labour time) is there in the commodity, which is decided at the moment of its exchange in the market. The formal equality conferred by the modern state to its citizens is presupposed by the Law and guarded by the institutions that represent the totality of citizens, providing closure to what it means to be equal and to be a citizen. In the first case, the quantitative equality or equivalence of one commodity to another can only be decided in terms of fractions of the market price of labour time, that is, decided in reference to a totality that is outside the relation of exchange itself. In the second case, the equality of a citizen to another is decided in reference to the count of citizens as members of the nation-state.
situation. The state represents the collective bond—the count as a One—that brings together the many. Both define equality in reference to a totality—transcendental and infinite—outside the situation and represented in it only in abstract form.

In contrast, the type of equality present in the principle of equal intelligence is not measured by dividing the mass of human intelligence by the number of individuals that compose that mass. Rather, "the totality of human intelligence is in each intellectual manifestation" (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 39). Each act of human thought contains the infinity of human intelligence in its entirety. Removed from the notion that knowledge is an endless cumulative process, Jacotot’s method required to put in practice one principle: everything is related to everything else (20).

Rancière argues persuasively that the same intelligence is present in all human creations. Every intelligence is an expression not of an individual’s capacity to think but of the power to think as such (of the potentia of thought). The same faculty of intelligence is present in recording, understanding and judging. The same intervenes in arts, mathematics, or poetry. The power to think is one and indivisible (26). The attribute of intelligence exists equally in each singular human being. The same intelligence expresses itself in multiple forms. There is manual and mental labour, but the intelligence applied to them is always the same (Virno, Grammar 109). None is superior to the other, but each has different forms and works on different materials. In human beings, intelligence always exists as an attribute that attributes, as a power to think.

In Jacotot’s method of universal teaching only one book was necessary. All that was necessary for intellectual emancipation could be found there. Every book, any book, is a concrete totality, complete in itself as a means of learning new things (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 65-73). The book, here, counts only as a materiality of signs and sentences whose interpretation by either the student or the master is inconsequential.

Above all, the book is the means to verify equality, to reveal an intelligence to itself. Being a totality, the book is the materiality that guarantees that there is nothing the master knows better than the student nor is there anything that the latter can hide from the master. Emancipated learning is, above all, to learn about one’s own power to do. This power arises from the composition of three bodies: the book, the ignorant master and the student. Wherever we find the work of reason we can also find the principle of equality of
intelligence at work. As a carrier of the totality of human intelligence, the book is the
ground for the verification of the equal intelligences of the master and the student. But
verification ends in the singular relation between these three bodies, for equality can only
be verified in the act of this subtraction and this composition.

**Representation and Expression**

If Jacotot resisted the transformation of his method (or, rather, his anti-method) of
universal teaching into a means to instruct the masses, it was because he was aware of the
paradox he was presenting. Intellectual emancipation does not require a pedagogue,
somebody who would pass his superior knowledge on to other people. Anyone can
emancipate anyone else as long as both verify the equality of their intelligences in a
*singular encounter*, which requires a subtraction from communication, a self-directed
search for truth propelled by each individual will, and a composition of wills that is not
subordinated to any law of communication. But if equality is extended beyond the
singularity of the encounter, it collides with the distribution of functions, occupations, and
places—the order of police that sustains and reproduces a fiction of inequality as it both
presupposes and negates the equality of everyone with everyone else (Rancière,
*Disagreement* 21-42). From the point of view of police, from which pedagogy descends
to help the ignorant, the equality of intelligences in the *here and now* of its verification is
a scandal. In other words, considering society as a whole, as a positive order,
emancipation—the verification of the underlying equality—can only manifest itself as
subversion of that order. The ideal of an *emancipated society* defines a police order—a
subordination of individual wills to the collective bond—that is incompatible with the
free wills of those involved.

Spinoza analyzed this apparent paradox when he argued that, in a large
combination of bodies and minds, such as the city or the state, the coincidence, at one
given moment, of the harmony of all the wills with the freedom of each of them is
impossible. The city requires a resignation, by each citizen, of the *potentia* that defines
his or her individual relation to others in the natural order. Once sovereignty has been
transferred, the city imposes the agreement between citizens upon them. Considering the
city (or the state, or society) as a unit, individuals are predefined as citizens and
distinguished from one another by their ability to obey laws (Spinoza, *Ethics*, VI, p. 37,
sch. II; Deleuze, Expressionism 266-7). The en masse uniformity of wills defined by the transcendent viewpoint of the state and the law can never be compatible with the free will of each person. The alternative is to consider that collectives cannot freely exercise their will and that only individuals can have free will (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 78). The ideal of an emancipated society is therefore based in a false premise: that individual wills can be reduced to a collective will.

The pedagogical republic of reason depends on a subjective operation that is not recognized as such, which consists in taking the possibility of a social order organized by reason as a given and unashamedly naturalizing it into an order that only exists as an idealization of a totality. In this subjective operation, social equality is always represented equality, equality made social, effected by institutions such as the school and so many other sources of explication that create the equality that takes place between fictive characters: the citizens. That is, the equality being pursued is not between actual human beings, but between those who have been recognized as parts of the whole—the nation-state. “Fiction” here does not mean “unreal” existence. Even though it has very real effects, the state is a fiction because it is the result of counting as one a multiplicity.

The idea that a society can be rational originates in the extrapolation of individual reason from a representation of the reason of the whole. Yet, as Jacotot argued, the fact that taking reason from individuals constitutes the idea of a rational society does not authorize us to conclude that society can give reason back to individuals. The credo that links pedagogy to social progress structures, from the top levels of consensual democracy down to the master-student relation in the classroom, a power relation whose companion belief is that knowledge organizes the path to emancipation. This vision is tied to the beliefs that reason can be communicated through linguistic interaction and that consciousness is the exclusive form of existence of thought. It supports the idea that discourse communicates something and is a carrier of truth and morals (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 136; Badiou, Ethics). This vision thus establishes a hierarchy of discourses and of those capable of producing them, a hierarchy that originates in a subjective operation whose subjective character is not acknowledged.

How can we think of emancipation beyond the singular verification of equality? How is it possible to conceive social change without subsuming the multiplicity of
individual free wills under norms imposed upon them by the collective counted as one? To start answering these questions we have to consider that contempt for others is usually the case when people relate to others in encounters left to chance.\textsuperscript{54} Thus, more often than not, the realization that we are equal to others derrails into its negation, as people fall into the primitive passion of feeling either inferior or superior to those others. The aggregation of individuals to constitute the collective fiction of a society is premised on a passion for inequality, on the fear of human beings of each other, and a need to seek protection by submitting to the laws, authority, and police structures that emanate from the collective bond and set limits to the multiplicity of wills (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 80; Deleuze, Expressionism 255-72; Virno, Grammar 31-35). Individuals act irrationally when their wills let them develop contempt for each other, that is, when they relate to each other comparing who is superior and who is inferior. However, while societies are always irrational, individual persons \textit{can be rational} when they look for an immanent common ground for their affections and ideas in the immediacy of each situation. These relations remain rational until their reason is transferred to a collective fiction.

What happens in the process of shifting focus from the singular wills to the aggregations of those wills? Jacotot did not hesitate to call these aggregations “fictions.” Indeed, in the production of those totalities there is always, in the “vertical” direction that goes from the individual to the collective, a process of idealization. The production of the state, the nation, or the Party is the result of a fetishization, which, not much unlike the fetishism of the commodity (separation from the instance that produces it and forgetting of this genesis), results in the apparent autonomy of the representation of the collective. In the opposite sense, from the totality to the individual, the collective fiction needs to be constantly “explicated”: “explication is not only the stultifying weapon of the pedagogues but the very bond of the social order. . . . The day-to-day work of explication is only the small change of the dominant explication that characterizes a society” (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 117). An outcome of these explications is the institution of the figure of the citizen and the relations of consensus. The process that takes place in this direction involves a form of police that distributes functions, roles, bodies, and identities.

Rancière argues that consensual democracies institute a “practice and theory of what is appropriate with nothing left over for forms of the state and the state of social
relations" (Disagreement 102). In this way, the equality of anyone with anyone is identical with the idea of “everyone in their place” (106). In today’s consensual democracies, representation governs the spontaneous epistemology of law and order that secures the molecular strengthening of the state throughout all situations. We can recognize representation in categories such as spectacle, consensus, and communication. In such regimes, democracy coincides with the administration/explication—by experts/pedagogues—of every form of existence.

Underneath the logic of representation there is an expressive dimension, the real movement that establishes its condition of possibility. This expressive logic is not considered—or is just forgotten, as Colectivo Situaciones argues—when the bond between individuals is looked at from a representational logic (19 y 20 146). When representation prevails we confer a status of reality to the fictitious unities of persons we call nations, states, and societies. But, in fact, those unities are nothing more than the result of a subjective operation. Outside this operation, the bodies thus aggregated remain multiple in their capacities to affect and be affected, in their movements and the speeds at which their existences connect. Indeed, the operation sometimes fails. The fictions are taken by what they are and, as in Argentina in December 2001, parallel circuits of expression and life arise that render the existing representations of the One inconsistent. The impostors who maintain that the sphere they call politics defines the boundaries of the possible are sent home. “All of them must go!” the multitude chanted in the streets of Buenos Aires.

A logic of expression underlays the logic of representation, but we can only think of it by subtracting ourselves from the latter’s global vision, built on abstraction and communication. It is possible to think of expressive forms of collective existence, which do not bring people together under abstract collective bonds, but rather establish concrete bonds through experimentation and practical engagement, without reducing these bonds to a conscious, discursive, or explicitly communicative coordination (Colectivo Situaciones, 19 y 20 147). The materialism of our times consists in undoing the idealizations of totality of the logic of representation.

Expression distinguishes three dimensions: that which expresses itself, the means of expression, and that which is expressed. A theorem, a hand-made shoe, a computer, a
dance performance, and the lecture of a philosopher are all manifestations of the same human intelligence, which is a means by which our common humanity, our condition as animals of the human species, expresses itself (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 136). The intelligences of two different people do not connect through the explication or pedagogical method that puts them in relation. On the contrary, if communication is possible it is because there is first an equal intelligence.

An expressive perspective of politics does not forget the ongoing production of the state as a delegation of power from multiple situations. Nor does an expressive practice of intellectual emancipation forget that truth is a personal encounter, a self-guided quest, which cannot be conveyed by discourse, pedagogical or not. Representation unites the multiple through discourse and symbolic exchange. The unification thus achieved is separated from that which it unites. Whether based in a dialogue or a monologue, pedagogy remains a practice of representation insofar as it presupposes that explication unites. It is a unity whose meaning receives closure from the side of the pedagogue, the explication, and, ultimately, the norm of success from which everything is judged.

Expression presupposes a different dynamics of social change, removed from the idea of a rational society, existing or expected. Change is no longer the work of predefined subjects acquiring consciousness of themselves and acting upon the structures of representation, but rather of subjects that come into existence as they subtract from representation, undoing “the relationships between the ways of doing, of being, and of saying” that define police (Rancière Disagreement 40). Subtraction is the passage to alternative forms of inhabiting the world, which no longer recreate the totalizations of representation. A true political subject follows, in this sense, an ethical, materialist path to change. As Maturana argues, the only materialist revolutions are the ethical revolutions, those in which old values are swept away in a movement that revolutionizes the desires of every single person: “in a human society a social change can only take place if the individual properties, and, hence, conduct, of its members change” (xxvii). Social change begins at the level of new interactions that do not confirm existing social relations. Creativity is worthy of its name only when it is antisocial, when it subtracts itself from
consensus and defies police, that is, when it pursues the formation of new types of bonds between people.

If we accept the argument that desire which emancipates is beyond knowledge, social change cannot result from getting a hold on desire in a "progressive way." The pursuit of emancipation requires abandoning the debris of opinions and pedagogical explications that constitute the communicational environment of the everyday world.

The principle of inequality inherent in pedagogy is a distraction from the ethical quest because it distrusts not just the desire of those who it deems inferiors, but also the ruptures with the status quo that may result from the emancipation of their desires. Hence the need of police to ensure that individual quests fall within the known paths of curricula, examinations, credentials, careers and jobs, regulating the movements of bodies and disciplining the types of collective bonds they establish. Ethical freedom is not given by natural law and guaranteed by society, but rather each person conquers it by her own effort.

The assumption that intellects are not equal takes refuge in the vanity of knowledge, which knows when it is in the presence of intelligence. The emancipator that assumes equality, however, is concerned with the forces that affect the will. Reason is much more than the products of the mind. It comprises the entire plexus of affects, emotions, and actions involved in thought. The fundamental questions that any emancipator has to investigate are: How do we get to desire emancipation? How do we persevere in that desire? How do we overcome our perseverance to remain the same and how can we become masters of our will?

Intellectual inequality postulates a knowledgeable master and the ignorance of those to be emancipated. There is nothing specifically emancipatory about knowledge as long as the hierarchies that are inherent in the logic of pedagogy remain in place. Antipedagogy finds support in the conquest of his or her own will by each person, supressing from the outset the foundation of the pedagogical relation. It is not satisfied with denouncing the fact that nobody sees the elephant standing in the middle of the room, because, even when that gesture can be helpful, more effective is to take a subtractive line of flight and squeeze out of the place before the beast flattens us against the wall.
Chapter Three
Pedagogies of Consciousness: Raising the Question about the Being of Politics

Where is politics?

For those used to a traditional reading of political events, the site where action was taking place was difficult to find in Argentina’s “hot summer” of 2001-2002. It was obvious that politics had left the scene of representation. It wasn’t in Casa Rosada, the presidential palace, vacated four times in fifteen days by politicians who had for a moment dared to believe that power resided in the executive branch of government. Hundreds of thousands of people defied—or, rather, ignored—the curfew imposed by a power in which nobody believed, as they continued to fill the streets of Buenos Aires like ants swarming a sugar cube. At one point they arrived, on the night of December 19th of 2001, in Plaza de Mayo, the historical square surrounded by Casa Rosada, the finance ministry, the national intelligence agency, and several other facilities usually regarded as the seat of power. The buildings were empty and no police force would have been able to contain the crowd if they wanted to “take them.” But the multitude decided to ignore them, as if it was obvious that politics had ceased having anything to do with the business of cabinet members, advisors, and policy experts.

In those days, no serious analyst would have thought that politics had anything to do with what was going on in Congress. Senators and deputies had suddenly left aside the differences between parties and blocs amidst rushed debates on how to recompose belief, first, in themselves as a “political class” and, second, in government institutions. Not an easy task to accomplish for people who could no longer walk on the street, go to restaurants, or even mow the grass of their own houses without triggering spontaneous “escraches,” noisy acts of repudiation organized on the spot by passers-by, by other customers at restaurants and bars, and by whoever happened to notice them.

The Supreme Court, the next branch in the order of succession, was out of the question. For several months, thousands of citizens gathered in front of the court building every Thursday demanding the resignation of the nine justices, most of them appointed
during the 1990s in order to both ease the obliteration of the parts of the modicum of welfare state that had survived the military dictatorship and pardon the military officers who had been found guilty of “disappearing” thirty thousand people.

The military had been the most important political force between the 1930s and the early 1980s, but now they could not do anything. Not only had their legitimacy collapsed without possibility of recovery in the near future, in part due to the hard work of grassroots human rights organizations who exposed the military’s systematic tortures and forced disappearances during the last dictatorship, but also the fear the armed forces had disseminated throughout the population in the 1970s was no longer effective to keep in their houses the members of the new generation of social activists.

The notion that whoever controls the media controls the political direction of the nation sounded quite absurd in those days. Politics could only jokingly be associated with the numerous newscasts and political talk shows broadcasted by the outlets of the large media monopolies. More than ever before the media seemed to be talking idly, as many of their former spectators had become protagonists. Producers could neither avoid giving airtime to the participants in the radical political experiments nor prevent being embarrassed by interviewees who would not settle for the usual rules of the media spectacle. Even the monopoly of the media over mass communication had been set into question by the rise of internet-based grassroots news services and a new generation of activist filmmakers.

If politics was not to be found in any of the established institutions, where was it? Was it in the streets, where even middle-class people had ceased to regard others with distrust and the poor with suspicion and to become co-participants in the hundreds of neighbourhood assemblies that sprung up in the early months of 2002? Did politics have anything to do with popular forms of taking control of public space such as “cacerolazos” (the contagious banging of pots and pans), “piquetes” (roadblocks by unemployed workers), the destruction of façades of bank branches by infuriated customers, not able to withdraw their savings by government decree while the banks took the money abroad? Or, perhaps the question should be: what had politics become? How to recognize it if the change had not only involved a migration to another site, but also a transformation of its very nature—perhaps a manifestation of its only possible form—that made it
unrecognizable for the logic of representation? Would politics come back to the places where it seemed to take place before, as if nothing had happened? While, on one hand, people in the streets still chanted “all of them must go”—“them” being whoever dared to claim for representation the center of political activity—on the other hand, politicians, from the Right to the Left, wondered what was to be done with the unusual forms of political action that had become visible in the last years.

The revolt of December 2001 took everyone by surprise. Those used to recognizing as political whatever can be captured by a grid that attributes roles to subjects, classes, institutions, parties, and unions were surprised by the strange force of the multitude, which seemed to come from nowhere. Those who were at home in the nomadic and horizontal forms of organization that had spread in impoverished neighbourhoods, decaying schools, abandoned factories, and towns without jobs, were surprised at what they were capable of.

The experiments with a different politics were everywhere. As one among many efforts to keep track of this fiery agitation, journalist Hernán López Echagüe travelled across several Argentinean provinces for several months in early 2002. On his journey he spent time with autonomous piquetero movements, popular assemblies, workers running factories without bosses, and peasant organizations. His travelogue, La política está en otra parte (Politics is elsewhere), reveals that the new politics was not only elsewhere. It also referred to something entirely different, to forms of reflection and action that were not intelligible for politicians, media commentators, and academics. The new politics López Echagüe found had neither a precise location nor a homogeneous object. It was multiple and diverse, profoundly democratic, yet openly condemning representative democracy. The groups that practiced it were always under construction, never finished, and lacked a predefined goal, other than the mutual support of their members. And even the category “member” was dubious, for the groups were vague constellations of people, with different levels of involvement. They refused hierarchies and rotated the people in charge of coordinating the activities. Most of these groups rarely participated in demonstrations. The place where they lived was the centre of their struggle for justice. They refused to accept the tutelage of the social workers sent by the state, but don’t call
themselves "anarchists." They were autonomous from parties, religious organizations, and trade unions, but did not call themselves "autonomists."

It is misleading to refer to this anonymous and diffuse political culture as a movement, or even as many movements. Even the category "political culture" is misleading, for it predefines our understanding to look for traces of politics that resemble the state-oriented notion we might have of it. Looking for a category that better describes these self-affirmative practices, Colectivo Situaciones proposes the expression new protagonism (19 y 20). A protagonist is the opposite of a spectator. While the spectator is the paradigmatic figure of representation, the individual who sustains the spectacle from his or her passivity, protagonists are those who are fully involved. Indeed, they seem to be actors and actresses playing theatre of the absurd, departing from the conventions, rehearsing plots that seem meaningless from the viewpoint of consensual democracy, and even writing the script as they go, without knowing how it is going to end.

The rebellion of December 19th and 20th of 2001 can thus be characterized as an "insurrection without an author" (Colectivo Situaciones, 19 y 20 33). A revolt that the available political and sociological knowledge was unable to explain, given the intensity, plurality, and unpredictability of the underlying ferment of those days and the months that followed. All grids used to interpret what had happened failed, and many prestigious intellectuals—conservatives, liberals, social democrats and leftists—who continued to interrogate the facts from the point of view of constituted powers, found their analyses embarrassed as the events unfolded. There was no central command of the revolt, no centre that could univocally pronounce an interpretation that could be turned into a consensus. The force of the movement was centrifugal. Rather than smashing the centres of power, it just fled them, disinvested from them the desires that had secured their consistency for years. It did not smash the existing forms of representation; it just deposed them.

The Pedagogical Response to the Century-Old Question

As the events of the Argentinean summer of 2002 seemed only to stimulate each other setting off an exuberant cascade of new forms of politicization, in other parts of the world conferences were organized, articles written, and books printed to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the publication of Lenin's What is to be Done? The interpretive elements
and recommendations provided by the pamphlet, arguably the how-to manual for uncountable successful and failed revolutionaries in the twentieth century, had been ignored by the Argentinean events. Those who tried to read the events through Lenin’s pedagogical eyes found themselves in antagonistic positions with the culture of self-organization that had taken the streets, where the slogan “all of them must go” was applied, as well, to the entire spectrum of left-wing parties.

What the revolt declared invalid was the answer Lenin gave to the question and the categories he used to formulate it. It could be argued that Lenin’s answer remains a milestone in the study of a way out of capitalist society for those seeking not to follow the path of the many political adventures that the book inspired. But it can also be argued that one particular category used by Lenin in the construction of the question remains a point of reference: politics. For him, politics made its appearance as a distortion of the social field, an interruption of consensus, a subtraction from the flow of the capitalist normality. This concept of politics put Lenin in a collision course with the mainstream social-democracy of his time. However, the path he chose to answer the question turns the epic confrontations in which he was involved into only skirmishes within representation.

Let’s look closer at how Lenin posed the question. He begins by establishing a common ground for the debate. The dominant element that sets the discussion going is the evidence that workers spontaneously struggle against capital. Lenin refers to strikes, destruction of machinery, and riots as some of the forms spontaneity can take. The multiple passive and active forms of insubordination are the material reality to take into account by anyone who seriously thinks about overcoming capitalist society, for these struggles condense, here and now, both a negation of capitalism and an affirmation of the possibility of a different society. Spontaneous anti-capitalist resistance is inherent in the subjective makeup of capitalist society. In corroborating the presence of resistance, and before adding any qualification to its spontaneity, Lenin and his Marxist antagonists agreed.

Given the evidence of spontaneous resistance, Lenin goes on to introduce a further element in his formulation of the question: struggles do not acquire a political dimension if they can be absorbed within the existing institutions and policies. If institutions can be created to manage insubordination, we are no longer in the realm of politics, but rather in
that of economics in the most etymological sense of the word: administration, management, police. Lenin criticized trade unionists for believing that there was a continuum between struggles that are merely 'economic' and those that were directly political. Even though the struggle for higher wages plays a decisive role in helping workers understand the need to overthrow capitalism, Lenin argued, “it does not at all follow that the economic struggle has the principal significance, because the most essential, the ‘decisive’ interests of classes can be satisfied only through radical political changes in general” (What is to be Done? 76n., emphasis in the original). It is because politics exists as an anomaly within the continuum, as an interruption of normality in the situation, that the question “what is to be done?” can be posed and needs to be answered. An answer, arguably, of the order of doing, a materialist recognition that “the point is to change the world,” manifested as an organic commitment to undoing the normality in relation to which politics appears as a distortion.

In his answer to the question, Lenin argues that the passage from spontaneous resistance to politics is something workers cannot accomplish by themselves because they are unable to develop their own worldview independently. They need the help of revolutionary theory, which can only come from outside the workers’ movement. Socialist consciousness has to be breathed from an external source.

This third step is the foundation of Lenin’s pedagogical answer. The innate ignorance of the oppressed defines the necessity of an outside knowledge. There is a lack measured in terms of consciousness that prevents those struggles from arriving at their successful conclusion in a socialist revolution. The passage to politics is the emergence of an anomaly, but the anomaly, as Lenin understands it, requires an external executor who knows something that those who are to incarnate the anomaly ignore. It is through a particular kind of experience of the knowledge delivered by a special type of knower that the departure from the continuum worshiped by the ‘economists’ becomes possible.

The external all-knowing figure in charge of this task is the Party, an organization that brings together workers and intellectuals who, like Marx, Engels, and Lenin himself, come from the ranks of the propertied class. The function of the Party is to educate the proletariat by revealing to them a truth that lies beyond their grasp, even though it is present in the practices they perform because of their position in production. The Party is,
then, responsible for "lifting [the working class] to the level of 'its own programme'" (79). The Party knows where politics is, what it consists of, who it needs to share this knowledge with, and where to lead the masses in order to bring about the permanent reign of justice. The elements are pre-constituted. The working class is a critical subject from the start; it only needs to overcome its ignorance. By working on the consciousness of workers, the Party raises them to their position as subject assigned to them by History.

Lenin's Party transcends the locality of struggles and their discontinuity in time. It seeks to overcome the workers' inability to acquire a global understanding of themselves as a class and of capitalism as an external force that workers must confront.

The Party manufactures the consistency of the proletariat, building the class as a consistent One in a process of centralization of knowledges and information that produces consciousness at the same rate as it uproots struggles from their situations. Homogeneity across the local situations is of outmost importance to create the proletariat as an identity in confrontation with capital. This identity becomes a norm to police the inside and outside of the camp created by the Party. Certain representations of "working class culture" acquire enough weight to disqualify differences as petit bourgeois, reducing the creative richness of struggles and obstructing the field of vision to anything that the interpretive grid is unable to retain. The Party begins to act like the state it seeks to control, producing a global and antagonistic collective bond.

In contrast to Lenin, I argue that pedagogy, as the defining feature of the Party, and consciousness as the surface of intervention, foreclose the meaning of politics. The confrontation between the working class and capital resolves in the terrain of representation. Politics makes its appearance as an anomaly, but the agency of the Party removes it from the realm of spontaneous struggles to secure it in a realm separate from them. For Lenin, the question "what is to be done?" already implies the response to other questions: Where is politics? Who is designated to produce the anomaly? Leninist politics is a political illusion. It occupies the same terrain as the spectacular politics of the bourgeoisie. Taking for granted that politics is where it appears to be, the Party and its bourgeois antagonists are bound to clash in its name in a war of mutual extermination over the control of the state.
An Alternative Answer

Lenin’s answer could not withstand unperturbed the numerous intellectual and practical challenges to which it has been exposed—from the Chinese and Cuban revolutions to the new forms of organizing rebellion that emerged in the 1960s in Western Europe, from the postmodern demise of grand narratives, to the many radical re-readings of the work of Marx. But, it was, above all, the numerous failed attempts to change society from the state that discredited the answer. The question *what is to be done* continues to be posed, with renewed energy, by millions who find their lives threatened by the reduction of every impulse to market imperatives.

Perhaps, no longer from a vanguard party and with no chances of seizing the state they so dearly would like to run, many anachronistic attempts to answer the question fall once again in the terrain of a pedagogy of consciousness. Whether it is by claiming a privileged viewpoint for intellectual activity that can later be injected in a natural subject that no longer coincides with the working class, or by claiming a privileged place for the conscious self, or by seeking to force the shortcut of the state and, along the way, judging every construction of an alternative sociality here and now in terms of its contribution to the political illusion of those who claim to know where politics is.

The hidden struggles that became visible in Argentina in December 2001—like those of Bolivia from 2003 to 2005, Ecuador since the late 1990s, and Mexico since 1994—are interesting experiments because they offer clues to answer the question differently. It is as if the political common sense has crossed a threshold, rendering communism unthinkable “as the economic or state model historically destined to substitute capitalism” (Colectivo Situaciones, “Por una política” 41). On the other side of the threshold, the claim that the state is the seat of politics loses consistency and no Party or class—and, in fact, nobody—can aspire to a leading—or even a supporting—role. Politics takes place as an anomaly—an event—but does not materialize in separate structures that can accumulate it for later use at the moment of delivering the *coup de grace* on the state. Rather, the concept of linear accumulation has been abandoned by the practice of what John Holloway calls the “cumulative breaking of linearity” (*Change the World* 215).

The pedagogy of consciousness had, as practical method, the discursive demolition by a master of the foundations of the socially instituted norm that kept the ruling class in
power. Immersed within the reality of critical modern thought, Lenin and fellow revolutionaries conceived such operation when the market as the hegemonic practice had not yet displaced the nation-state. As a meta-organizer of domination, the modern state sought to secure its hegemony by alienating meanings that escaped to its norm. Under those circumstances it made sense, from an emancipatory point of view, to subvert the dominant meanings.

Rather than disciplining citizens, neoliberalism secures domination by multiplying enclosures, relentlessly extending the commodity form to every realm of life. The market does not need to limit freedom of speech, of opinion, or even of action, as long as everybody respects private property. Autonomous from the political centrality of state sovereignty, the market superimposes its own biopolitical mechanisms upon the existing disciplinary apparatuses. The fear of unemployment—of expulsion from access to the basic needs become commodities—makes life precarious. Under free market conditions, any homogeneous dominant meaning is volatile and fragmentation prevails, with the consequence of uncertainty, anguish, and heightened individualism. No institution can provide containment for these experiences.

Under these circumstances, the formation of political subjects surely requires an operation quite different from the one assigned to the working class in the Leninist tradition. There is arguably no point in pursuing a rupture of instituted meanings. The question is, rather, to produce and inhabit situations in which the desire to live can thrive. The creation of inhabitable situations consists in “interrupting at certain points the dominance of the market” (Lewkowicz and Cantarelli 96). As Colectivo Situaciones points out, the current reality of communism “is the power (potencia) of the struggle for freedom and justice that is carried out in the practices of counterpower” (“Por una politica” 41). The task is to produce a sociality not ruled by the logic of exchange value, working toward the creation of non-market values and new commons by weaving concrete bonds of love and friendship. In the struggles that strive to produce new forms of life there is no need of a master-liberator, because the task of producing new relations involves the ethical transformation of life, values, affects, and images of happiness in everyday practices.
The question *what is to be done?* is not obsolete as long as one acknowledges that the conditions for intervention have irreversibly changed. Spontaneous struggles continue to erupt, they produce events with renovated force. And, as in Lenin’s times, refusal is hampered, repressed and recuperated in numerous forms, ever more sophisticated. Emancipation continues to consist in practicing politics as a distortion, only now the anomaly is sustained by an ongoing production of forms of life that experiment with multiplicity as their most cherished asset.

**Consciousness, a Metapolitical Concept**

When can we say that politics has taken place? What does knowledge have to do with the question concerning *what is to be done?* Rancière reflects upon these questions when distinguishing between politics and what political philosophers conceive as politics (*Disagreement* 61-64). Politics takes place when a part of the community—a part not recognized as such—makes effective its desire for equality, producing a distortion in the counting of parts in the community: a part that has not been counted makes itself visible. Thus, the roots of politics are never to be found in an essence of the community. Rather, politics appears as a distortion; it disrupts the logic of police.

The politics of philosophers, on the other hand, originates in an idea of what politics should consist of. This idea dismisses the effective affirmation of equality that politics materializes as democratic only in appearance, which fails to resemble the truly democratic essence of politics that political philosophers are set to investigate. The programme of political philosophy is not politics but the essence of politics. Carrying out such a programme involves suppressing politics itself as an unthinkable distortion. It requires, in other words, the elimination of the difference between police and politics. Political philosophy, Rancière argues, thinks the community as One, with its ordered distribution of parts and functions, rather than the multiple combinations from where distortions arise.

Rancière identifies three configurations of the politics of political philosophers. *Archipolitics* saturates the social field, abolishes any possible manifestation of a void, and seeks to reconcile ways of being and ways of thinking of every part of society. Since throwing into question the principle that defines the community as One is the truth of political life, archipolitics suppresses the possibility of recognizing politics as a litigious
activity from the start. But those who do not have a part stubbornly reappear claiming their equality. This is why a second figure makes itself present. *Parapolitics* recognizes as natural—as akin to the political animals human beings are—the order that inscribes within a constitution the war between the rich and the poor. Parapolitics invents the category of the individual as the origin of sovereignty, alienated to the state to prevent the war of all against all. The exercise of freedom no longer belongs to a part of the society that comes into existence as an anomaly by positing its equality, but it is rather identified with the liberty of the individual protected by the law. However, distortions continue to occur, since classes do not coincide with the kinds of conflicts designed to happen between individuals and the state. *Metapolitics*, the third figure, enters the scene proclaiming that the truth of politics is its falsity. Metapolitics denounces politics as untrue because underneath the political and juridical order of representation there is another reality that supports it: the classes, the social sphere, and class struggle as the real movement of society. Against the framework of appearances, metapolitics deploys its interpretive resources to distinguish appearance from reality, political and juridical superstructures from the class whose movement is called to suppress appearances.

Archipolitics, whose inspirer is Plato, and parapolitics, whose mentors included Aristotle, Hobbes, and Rousseau, elicit the classical pedagogies of enlightenment and education. Metapolitics, which originates with Marx, brings forth a pedagogy of consciousness, a form of criticism that accompanies from a position of knowledge the revelation of the hidden truth of politics to the executors of real history.

In metapolitical terms, the real movement of human history is not the flesh and blood of living bodies but a process governed by objective forces. Humanity progresses in an ascending spiral from its infancy toward a triumphant stage, ahead on the horizon, in which all contradictions will be overcome and classes abolished. Moving the historical process forward, as its subject, is the working class, the latest of the exploited classes to confront its antagonist—capital—in the last of a succession of modes of production. The working class occupies a universal situation. Its confrontation with the bourgeoisie is the fundamental contradiction that subsumes all others. Marxism thus operates on the belief that knowledge can make the world transparent to itself.
Seen in this light, history is the standpoint from where to perform what are considered to be concrete analyses of concrete power relations between classes. Understanding social development becomes a scientific study of classes, not in the political sense of the manifestation of equality by the unaccounted for—what the ancient Romans called the proletariat—but in the police sense of a grouping of people categorized by its occupational activity, social rank, and relation to the tools of their trade. Indeed, in contrast to the metapolitical position, it is possible to affirm that what distinguishes capitalist from non-capitalist epistemological positions is not the opposition between two classes (the old socialist problematic that tries to teach capitalists that there is not just one class), but the opposition between the single class that mobilizes the flows of the capitalist machine and those who are outside this class (in the sense the Roman proletariat were outside), launching different sorts of attacks against this social machine (Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus 255).

Class, for the metapolitical perspective, does not define the variety of subjects fighting injustices in different situations, but the objective relation of workers to the conditions of production. Workers are bearers of a putative consciousness that results from the position they occupy in production: “the proletariat is anticapitalist and communist in itself, even if it ignores it” (Benasayag and Charlton 144). But, while workers cannot apprehend their interests, they are destined to grasp their class consciousness.

To assert that history is rational implies regarding it as knowable; a specialized knowledge that defines a division between knowers and not-knowers. The former can research what a true consciousness of the interests of the masses would be like, and so accompany in a process of awareness those to whom that consciousness belongs, but who live in falsity.

The consciousness imputed to the proletariat serves the vanguard intellectuals as a standpoint from which to assess the subjective conditions of actual workers, the degree to which they live in “false consciousness,” and the design of the pedagogical strategy. The consciousness that this operation is said to produce is totalizing in the sense that it promises to bring the world together in harmony and justice. Metapolitical totalization is
symmetrical to the totalization of archipolitics: the latter creates an ordered space of the visible, the former creates a homogeneous form of the truth that remains invisible.

The notion that truth can be found by scientific means would not be appealing unless a utopian content was attached to it. Seeing the present and the past from the standpoint of the future has been, in moments of adversity, a positive force in political action, providing much needed moral support and helping emancipatory movements tolerate defeats (Gramsci 336). But most of the time it has the opposite effect. The sense of being the subject of history liberates the class from any responsibility for the situation. It carves a cozy sense of protection within an anonymous, unknown majority. Leninist pedagogy, in this sense, guides the rite of passage toward a state in which workers do not act spontaneously, but are guided by class principles, because they assume their belonging to a role guaranteed by history (Benasayag and Charlton 131).

When emancipation presupposes the mastery of certain knowledge a pedagogue unavoidably appears. As supreme Knower, the vanguard party occupies the place of a master-liberator that knows what is to be done. The idea that its knowledge derives from the analysis of an objective process entitles the vanguard party to inhabit a trans-situational space. As Benasayag and Sztulwark point out, time is topologized, unfolded along an arrow of progress that allows the vanguard to think of itself as always being some steps ahead, in order to, from that position “organize the understanding of the present and ‘give meaning’ to action” (117). Thus, the master liberators place themselves in a position from where they can explicate new events by reference to the transcendental truth of historical progress. Under the lens of the vanguard, historical innovation takes place only if it conforms to the pre-established arrangement of elements of analysis to which the master has privileged access. Outside this, events are non-events.

This is perhaps why, to the self-appointed vanguards, the Argentine of December 2001 only made sense as the beginning of an organic crisis that could be resolved either as an escalation towards a socialist revolution or as a generalized repression. The multiple forms of struggle that became visible and the new ones that were invented appeared to the party left as merely “anarchic” protests—only social, but not political—because they lacked the political direction of a vanguard. History was not working as expected.
Finding True Consciousness

Implicit in the devotion for science of certain Marxism is the separation between, on one hand, intellectuals as the group equipped with the knowledge that can guide the working class towards victory, and, on the other, the proletariat as an "other" to be accompanied in its struggle. Such separation abolishes self-emancipation (Holloway, *Change the World* 128-31).

A notable attempt to overcome the founding separation that institutes the pedagogical relation was proposed by Georg Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness*.58 A subtle metapolitician, Lukács seeks to identify the subjective kernel of forces that hamper the realization of true class politics. The bourgeoisie, he argued, is not merely unwilling but also unable to come to terms with the totality of relations they are part of. They see commodities as finished products, but they cannot see in them the traces of the labour process, because their interests stand in between as an epistemological obstacle. Reification is inherent in the natural view of the world in a capitalist society. Not even workers escape from it. However, their class position gives workers an epistemological advantage. Like the bourgeoisie, workers live in a fetishized world. But their own experience as a commodity puts workers in a position to recognize fetishization as a consequence of the relation they are forced to establish with capital. The battle the proletariat has to fight against capital is also a struggle against itself as the protagonist of living relations that directly produce reification. For workers, the process of awareness is directed toward a totality that includes their own subjectivity.

In principle, Lukács seems to remove the need of the pedagogical figure that accompanies the worker. However, how can the proletariat overcome fetishism and identify its true consciousness, the one it aspires to reach by overcoming reification? This is something the proletariat cannot do with its own resources. The insight that anticipates the true consciousness needs a pedagogue that can separate it from false consciousness. As Holloway points out, Lukács is forced to invoke the vanguard party—which he drops as a *deus ex machina*—because of the way in which he lays out the problem: in so far as the true (de-reified) consciousness is tied to the knowledge of the totality, he cannot avoid the question regarding the supreme knower of *what is to be done* and the ultimate pedagogue of class interests (*Change the World* 84). Lukács operates within a
problematic in which emancipatory politics is tied to an effort of consciousness to know the reality. His realism presupposes a standpoint (Marxism) from which knowledge of reality can be complete and assigns the body of specialists in that knowledge (the Party) the task of unveiling reality. 59

Conceived as the royal road to the knowledge of reality, Marxism becomes a standpoint above the real movement in concrete situations, a metapolitical theory that informs local practices. Universality is guaranteed by the notion that there is One situation. In this sense, the category of totality yields to the temptation of producing a knowledge that mirrors the capitalist unification of the world. Class struggle becomes the underlying force in all struggles and the critique of political economy a master explication, capable of rendering the truth about all forms of domination. A global, trans-situational perspective is the result of reducing “situational multiplicity to a single explanatory principle” (Malgré Tout 64). Thus, the notion that there is One master situation or a “situation of situations” can only exist as an idealization whose effect is the reduction of potentia in the situation to impotence or to an epiphenomenon of the activity of intellectuals (individual or collective).

When class struggle becomes the master key to interpret emancipation, the struggles of ecologists, feminists, anticolonialists, or minorities become more or less serious depending on their correspondence with the interpretative principle. The result is the normalization of the particularities of each situation (Benasayag and Charlton 183).

Beyond Common Sense

Marxist positivism conceives consciousness as a reflex of objective conditions. Vanguard intellectuals only need to investigate those conditions to access the material core wherefrom politics springs out. In his study of common sense, Antonio Gramsci made a fundamental contribution to the critique of this positivist Marxist transubstantiation of matter into souls. Like Spinoza and Giambattista Vico before him, Gramsci believed that the imaginary delegation of individual powers produces central power, which, despite being imaginary, has real effects (Benasayag and Charlton 136-8). The knowledges, meanings, and values held in common are the key to such process. Therefore, a political intervention has to focus on the warp and weft of desire, the words, values, and relations in common (the collective bond) as they appear in the situation.
While the pedagogies of consciousness dismiss common sense by considering it an obstacle, an antipedagogical perspective of intervention separates itself from positivism to focus on the existing common sense.

Gramsci broke away from the metapolitical concern for a true consciousness of the class that can be hypothesized by a calculation of objective interests of an oppression that is considered to exist in itself. By arguing that every person is a philosopher, Gramsci defined the particular mode of operation of language and culture. Common sense is fragmented: “there is not just one common sense” (325). Being multiple, common sense has an epistemic function: for those who inhabit it, the arguments that originate from it are true. The person who lives immersed in common sense refuses to accept any challenge to what, from her point of view, is true. Common sense can be changed, but not eliminated. Even critical thinkers live by its presuppositions because “we are all conformists of some conformism or other” (324). In Gramsci’s view, critical thought can, however, change common sense by “renovating and making ‘critical’ an already existing activity” (331). The point of departure for this process already exists in the traces of “good sense” within common sense. The task of critical thought, Gramsci argued, is to make this healthy core coherent and self-reflexive.

Gramsci did not fall to the pedagogical temptation to conceive a critical thought that can dissolve common sense. When critical thought is conceived as superior to common sense, the latter seems to obscure the consciousness of the oppressed, preventing them from knowing the truth that can liberate them. Critical thought thus takes under its responsibility any aspects of sociality that appear ‘dysfunctional’, ‘deviant’, or ‘opaque’. As the chaotic configuration of common sense is a cause of concern, critical intellectuals take upon themselves the task of “pruning the excesses, adjusting the pathological and formatting the multiple character of the social” (Colectivo Situaciones 19 y 20 81).

However, as Miguel Benasayag and Edith Charlton point out, Gramsci makes a concession to pedagogy when he argues that the statements of “good sense” differ from the rest of common sense in their content. Good sense is made of sedimentations of science, of philosophy insofar as it is critical, and, in this sense, capable of “superseeding religion and ‘common sense’” (326).
Following Badiou, Benasayag and Charlton argue that what distinguishes critical thought from common sense is not the content of the statements. Rather, there is a constitutive difference in the way in which each of these registers is organized. Knowledges, statements, and discourses that are part of the situation compose common sense. Within the situation there are struggles and antagonistic positions; there are words, ideas, bodies, and things, (dis)organized in a multiple, contradictory, and heterogeneous fashion. But the struggles within the situation are part of its structure. Any struggle that draws its strength from a rigorous analysis of the situation is still part of the situation. Scholarly analyses of the political-economic conjuncture, militant considerations of class interests, and political opinions made available by new media are but small talk. The horizon of the struggles that can be inspired by them does not go beyond the situation. The struggles that break out from the situation do not belong to a critical or rational core within the situation, but rather are not regarded by the situation as being part of it. Those struggles can articulate a truth about the situation only insofar as such truth remains indiscernible by the situation. They are indiscernible, even though they are part of the situation. The transformation of the working class into an object of knowledge (sociological, historiographic, economic, etc.) is, in this sense, one of the reasons for the death of Marxism. For, as Badiou suggests, insofar as the “working class” is treated as an empirical component, counted by knowledge as a part of the situation, its capacity to produce truths is reduced to the veridicity of the statements that can be produced about it (Being and Event 334).  

Common sense cannot be eliminated because it constitutes the basis of sociality, the stuff of which the collective bond is made: the “anarchic debris of circulating knowledge” (Badiou, Ethics 50). To produce new knowledge does not really involve thinking. Rather, thought is what deposes the knowledges that constitute common sense. Even the most prestigious scientific and academic institutions produce abundance of knowledge, but no thought. Which is not to say that academic institutions are not knowledgeable. They indeed are, and infinitely so. But knowledge is not thought and no accumulation of knowledge leads to thought. Nor is there a shortcut between knowledge and thought. As Benasayag and Charlton point out, anyone who wants to survive in academia knows that too much curiosity or any substantial departure from the existing
knowledge paradigms can endanger a degree, publication, or tenure (135). Freedom of thought, in this sense, is an academic illusion. What exists in the freest institutions is actually freedom of knowledge.

In What is Called Thinking?, Martin Heidegger argued that university disciplines of all sorts, including the one he teaches, do not think. Badiou, on the other hand, fully endorses this view, and so he does not consider ontology, even the discourse on being he practices, a truth procedure through which thought unfolds. For him there are only four kinds of truth procedures, namely politics, science, art and love. “As such, love, art, science and politics generate—infinitely—truths concerning situations: truths subtracted from knowledge which are counted by the state only in the anonymity of their being” (Being and Event 340). Truths are not philosophical, but philosophy exists because truths exist first. Philosophy, in this sense, is an act that ponders the truths of a given time, the truths out of which a given epoch is made (Badiou, “Números” 16).

The pedagogical attempt to suppress common sense (the myth that the oppressed achieve emancipation when they abandon the irrational and disorganized beliefs that are part of their lived experience and keep them from reaching consciousness of their interests) has been an old aspiration within modernity, recreated in different ways through different renewals of the definition of conscious reason in order to make it better suited to model the incoherent configuration of common sense (for instance, Habermas’ development of a theory of communicative reason). These efforts fail to address emancipatory thought and practice because they fail to acknowledge some key issues. The main problem is that, while the rational fidelity to a hypothetical true consciousness deduced from a study of the interests of a class, a gender, or an ethnicity is always a totalizing effort to impose a form of coherence, “good” sense achieved through critical analysis cannot be forced to rely on coherence, explicit or implicit.

To avoid any imperialist aspiration of good sense, it is necessary to maintain the distinction between common sense and critical thought as two different registers, with different functions and subjective implications. The common sense of a situation is composed of knowledges of different sorts. In this vast encyclopedia there are no truths. Truths are the outcome of thought. The affirmation that there is a correspondence between a statement that is said to be true and its object establishes the correctness of the
statement, its veridicity, but not a truth. The confusion of veridicity with truth is pedagogical because it lays the ground for the emergence of vanguards, knowers of the “truth” so understood, who, because of their privileged access to the critical knowledge that emancipates, feel entitled to think on behalf of the rest. The antipedagogical question is that, if politics as a collective thought is possible because everybody thinks, which forms of intervention are possible for critical thinkers that activate and enhance this characteristic of politics? A further step toward antipedagogy would be to reject not only the view that common sense is inferior to critical thought, but also the notion that common sense becomes “wiser” as ideas of rational content become intertwined with it.

We are immersed in infinite meshes of common sense. They compose the fabric of relations we live in and in which collective bonds of domination find support. It is for this reason that no serious—materialist—conception of emancipatory thought can ignore common sense. But, on the other hand, when raising common sense from the obscurity where pedagogical thinking had confined it one has to be careful not to abandon oneself to common sense, because that presupposes the removal of any possible ground for thought and action beyond what is presented in the situation. The postmodern critique of pedagogical Marxism inverts the modern hierarchy between critical thought and common sense. Shifting the focus to the study of the culture of everyday life, urban lifestyles, popular creativity, and difference for its own sake, these critics turn the texture of culture into a source of truth and thought. When common sense acquires absolute value, the possibility of thinking rupture disappears behind a cloud of relativism, while discourse, opinion, and naïve empiricism become the focus of intellectual activity.

On the contrary, there is emancipatory thought of the multiple only when ruptures are specific to each situation and no situation can subsume all the others. Thinking, in this sense, is an operation in the situation that surpasses knowledge, pushing common sense towards inconsistency. Thought produces truths that are not superior forms of knowledge, but declarations of insufficiency of the existing common sense of the situation. A rupture occurs when the knowledges that compose common sense expire and can no longer account for the real of a situation.

The relation between thought and common sense unfolds in an open dialectic. Once thought opens a gap in common sense, the fabric of common sense changes. The politics
without centrality of the movement that ousted the Argentinean institutions in December 2001 is a good example. The *new protagonism* deposed existing political representations that, until a few months earlier, were part of the common sense of the majority. At the same time, it invented previously unthought-of forms of thinking and doing politics. The effects of the *de-instituting* forces have been irreversible. The new protagonism shattered the legitimacy of the state politics that claimed to represent the citizenry without replacing it with an alternative state centrality. The challenge for the crisis administrators was to rebuild the state as a central representation. But to do that they have had to make compromises and acknowledge in their discourse and in some of their policies the de-instituting force of the real movement.⁶²

Thinking involves *de-instituting* knowledges and going beyond them, opening new lines of research and creating new knowledges, which will eventually be deposed. The new possibilities institute new becomings that cannot be inferred from "the knowledges that represent the elements of that situation" (Colectivo Situaciones, 19 y 20 80).

Critical knowledge defines a totalization, an attempt to force a new consistency based on the truths that have emerged from deposing the previous common sense. By contrast, to think in situation involves a detotalization. The orientation is not metapolitical but political, focused on the *potentia* of thought itself. It does not force a new consistency but rather takes a position within the multiple, unarticulated, and inconsistent form of the new common sense in order to investigate the points of rupture.

The value of the knowledges produced by a process of thought does not depend exclusively on the internal coherence of the ideas, practices, and projects thus formed. Nor does the efficacy of those knowledges depend on the premises that give them value from the point of view of their universality and trans-situational utility. Political thought is immanent because the hypotheses it produces can only be corroborated in the situation.

Thinking presupposes a decision to dismiss metapolitics (as well as archipolitics and parapolitics), declaring invalid both the view that the working class embodies the true movement of society, whose untrue side is the fiction of sovereignty, and the need for a specialized knowledge that will allow the subject to arise once it finds its true consciousness. By removing the modern myth of a master subject that produces a master rupture valid for all situations, we are left with concrete workers—as well as women,
immigrants, unemployed, impoverished peoples, people in prison, in asylums, etc—each of them is in a situation that has specific forms of domination that do not subsume the others. In each case, the emancipatory task consists in finding the point of rupture, which is indiscernible from the point of view of common sense. In each situation the question *what is to be done* invokes different presuppositions. The answers can never be the same.

While the political philosophy of class interests proceeds to determine what is to be done from what can be known, the thought of the situation proceeds from ignorance. There is no universal knowledge that can account for what is to be done in all situations. *What is to be done* is always the subject of an investigation—performed with both minds and bodies—that starts from scratch, for in each situation novelty arises from uncertainty.

Antipedagogy fully embraces the practice of doubt. It orients its investigations toward singular instances of thought whose action of resistance creates new forms of sociality. It works with groups for whom the conjuncture exists not as a globality but as an element of their situation. Its intervention is a composition with groups that practice autonomy as a disposition to, first, find their own capacities that involves a subtraction from both the media spectacle and the microclimate of activist circles, and, second, produce an alternative collective bond in the situation (Colectivo Situaciones, 19 y 20 106).

In this sense, as Holloway puts it, “the crisis of the revolutionary subject is the liberation of the subject from knowing” (Change the World 212). Pedagogical criticism claims to know what is to be done. In contrast, today’s rebels “do not know any more what revolution means” (215). Like the Zapatistas, they ask questions as they walk.

Politics, then, is a collective thought oriented toward the rupture of the consistency of the situation that affirms freedom and justice as concrete universals. Thinking is universal, not in the global sense in which the state or the market are universal, but in the situational sense of resistance against the process of abstraction and separation that weakens *potentia* and thus constitutes the subjective foundation of capitalism. In this sense, thinking in situation is a critique of the category of consciousness in another sense: insofar as it conceives individuals as closed units for whom free conscious activity is a primary organizer of their actions.

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Thinking with the Body

Lenin famously made the case that the greatest efforts of the core of professional revolutionaries that are to become the party have to be directed toward the transfer of revolutionary theory to the movement. The transformation of spontaneous resistance into politics depends on whether the oppressed have access to “advanced theory” (Lenin 58–9). Pedagogy presupposes that individuals are autonomous rational agents who can decide at will over the rules of their behaviour. Thus, to operate upon consciousness is to contribute to the knowledge individuals have at hand and can use to decide what to do and say, what to think and desire. The assumption is that consciousness is a state of mental awareness that can (and should) be communicated.

The Bolshevik tradition did not go beyond the modern identification of thought and consciousness according to which thinking is understood as the exclusive activity of the mind. As Miguel Benasayag and Diego Sztulwark suggest, in the view of modern revolutionaries, the head is the privileged organ, both in control of the body and incapable of doing by itself.64 According to this belief, shared to this day by many, “intellectuals” who are in possession of advanced theory have the responsibility to “think,” while activists are the ones responsible for “action.” The thought of activists is, in this view, limited because of the imperfect information they possess—their direct involvement in struggles gives them only a local perspective. “Intellectuals,” on the other hand, positioned from the global perspective that theory gives them, can process complex and varied forms of information.

The mind and body split reproduces a separation that is constitutive of capitalist relations. Separation is the mode of existence of capitalism. Its most elementary form is the alienation of people from the means that can ensure their subsistence, turning them into “free workers.” Workers are then severed from what they produce, which confronts them in the form of commodities and money. The separation between “thinkers” and “doers,” with the former occupying a central position, occurs in multiple forms along the way as the capitalist form of command spreads through society. In the process, the body is relegated to a subordinate position, treated as the seat of irrational passions and appetites, the reign of animality more or less under control. When the body comes under consideration, it is subordinated to cognition, disciplined by the mind.
Cultivated by capitalist modernity for many years, the centrality of an autonomous faculty of reason is a myth that not always succeeds in concealing the fact that consciousness is just a level of thought, but neither the only nor the richest one. By removing consciousness from the multiplicity to which it belongs, rationalism pretends to ignore that there is always more to reality than that which can be calculated. The real is an ungraspable composition of multiple potentiae that always exist in excess with respect to the models constructed by reason. Sooner or later the representations created to account for the real run into the unexpected (Benasayag, Pensar la libertad 132-3). That is why the greater the effort to secure a central position for consciousness, the more cataclysmic the failure of this narrow understanding of reason.

Benasayag and Sztulwark identify two modes of thought. Theoretical thought involves consciousness. Practical thought, on the other hand, does not require conscious or symbolic mediation. The practical mode involves the body, which thinks by finding resistances, confronting obstacles and having to resolve them. Practical thought is generally associated with the practice of an artist, a performer, or an athlete, yet every person thinks with the body (Benasayag and Sztulwark 145-6). Practical thinking is neither superior nor inferior to theoretical thinking. Both need each other and, being inseparable dimensions of human praxis, both help one another in moments when they cannot proceed by their own means.

Similarly, Heidegger argued that thinking is a craft, “just something like building a cabinet. ... All the work of the hand is rooted in thinking. Therefore, thinking itself is man’s simplest, and for that reason hardest, handiwork (What is Called Thinking? 16). In his ethnographic work Bourdieu has found that “practical belief is not a ‘state of mind’ ... but rather a state of the body” (The Logic of Practice 68). Thus, an idea that is removed from practice becomes abstract and impotent. The reverse is also true. A practice disconnected from theoretical thought is politically harmless. In this sense, Benasayag and Sztulwark argue that “Western universities are full of ‘ideas’ which the system knows are ‘not dangerous’ because it knows their impotence” (148). Following Spinoza, the authors use the word “impotent” to refer to “lacking potentia.”

Only a small fragment of thought passes through consciousness. There is thought in what the body desires, fears, feels, and does. Consciousness ignores most of what the
body thinks and, because of this, as Colectivo Situaciones suggest, a consciousness separated from the body "is not prepared to be in charge of life" (19 y 20 76). The body is paralyzed when the power of consciousness becomes an overwhelming presence. Rather, the activity of thought is permanent and unconscious. There is not mental activity separate from bodily activity. Even when we have ideas of ideas, our body is involved—in this case, passively. Doing, or the lack of it, is always part of intellectual activity.

The Argentinean revolt of 2001 embarrassed the analyses of those used to interpret action in terms of rational interests, deception, and consciousness because they were unable to recognize this level of thinking: “the separation between the bodies and their movements and the imaginary plans organized by the established powers became tangible like never before in [Argentina’s] history” (Colectivo Situaciones, 19 y 20 36). If anything, the bodies of men and women, young and old, chanting and running, fighting against the police and banging their pots and pans for thirty straight hours, was an elaborate thought of the multitude. The adjective “spontaneous” that many attached to the revolt contained the implicit derogatory notion that an action without a leadership that plans ahead or without the goal of securing positions in the state is a practice that lacks thought. However, only collective thinking—the thought of many bodies—could have sustained “the rejection of any organization that tried to represent, symbolize, and hegemonize street activity” (37). The sustained presence of the multitude disestablished both the mass media monopolies and the state apparatus. No central state situation could be re-imposed for months. The thought of bodies was indeed multiple, it included verbal communication, but the sustained force of the movement was not exclusively guaranteed by the words exchanged. No explicit coordination was necessary. The plurality of initiatives resonated with each other producing similar elaborations simultaneously.

The reimposition of a central state situation in Argentina, on the other hand, was the result of a long process that included repression, the participation of certain movements in the formation of a new government, and the construction of representations that gave consistency to the inconsistent multiplicity, which in this way created the conditions for the reinstitution of the institutions that had been deposed.66 The movements and experiments that arose out of the emerging multitude were not innocent victims in this process. On the contrary, it was their own participation in their own normalization, their
separation from their capacity to do, that diminished, and in some cases cancelled, their ability to sustain the intensity of politics conceived as thought. Normalization, in this case, was a process that affected not just the minds of those involved, but, more significantly, that mobilized their hopes and feelings, their anguish, fears and desires. It included, as Colectivo Situaciones points out, the emergence of a new breed of "specialists," pedagogues of the multitude who sought to order the chaos; the transformation of innovations into formulae that could be repeated everywhere and became routine; the acceptance of the times and spaces constructed by the institutional dynamic of the state; and the transformation of novel ideas, such as autonomy and horizontal organization, into corsets that constrained the creative capacity of certain experiments ("Politicizing Sadness").

Individual and Person

The identification of self and consciousness has been at the centre of the affirmation of an ontology of the individual in capitalist modernity. Foucault and others have shown that the interiorization of a "free" consciousness, a fundamental moment in the production of human beings as individuals, has largely been the work of disciplines acting over the body.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari argue that the moment of primitive accumulation, by instituting the nuclear family as the basic unit of reproduction, is also the instance that produces the individual ego as an angle of the Oedipal triangle (Anti-Oedipus 168-71). It is the moment of investment of the social field by interests. The representation of the individual as a molar unit eliminates the infinite partial forms in which persons relate to innumerable objects of desire. The resulting autonomy becomes possible only through the reduction of the multiple dimensions and interplays of desire to the one-dimensional entity of the individual.

The individual as an autonomous agent has a constitutive role in capitalist economics, politics, and legal systems. The utilitarian tradition is much larger than the philosophy called utilitarianism. Luc Marie Nodier has noted that utilitarianism is alive and kicking in the forms of hedonism that have prevailed as meta-discourse from Plato to present-day social sciences. Utilitarianism presupposes that individual interests can be known objectively and that those interests considered as an aggregate determine the common
good of the community counted as One. In political philosophy, contractualist theory argues that the consensus between rational possessive individuals is the basis for the existence of the state. Capitalist political economy identifies human desire with individual rational choice. The individual is treated as the object of determinable needs that are to be satisfied by commodities. Capitalism cannot guarantee its reproduction if it does not constantly reproduce the belief in individual autonomy. In this sense, the individual is “both the product and the producer of the imaginary of capitalist power, of the one-dimensionality of life, and of instrumentality” (Benasayag and Sztulwark 156).

To make apparent the relations that are concealed by the notion of the individual, Benasayag and Sztulwark propose the figure of the person. In contrast to the individual, produced as a separation from the social and cooperative bonds from which human beings are inseparable, the person “exists as a ‘fold’, a singular expression of life, to which it belongs” (152). Person defines a point of view for which the free individual, conceived as a consciousness autonomous in its decisions, is an illusion. Even if they ignore it, individuals are pierced through and acted upon by the common sense in which they are immersed. Spinoza argued that no individual was born free and consciousness had no liberating effect: “men think themselves free, inasmuch as they are conscious of their volitions and desires, and never even dream, in their ignorance, of the causes which have disposed them to wish and desire” (Ethics I, Appendix). The individual appears when the person ignores her situation. Inhabiting the world as a person entails an encounter with resistances that the individual’s reason is unable to understand, much less to predict.

An emancipatory project that brings into effect the material processes that reproduce the individual is doomed to fail. No alternative collective bond can result from the concept of “common good” if it presupposes a coming together of the interests of individuals, as if the latter figure sprung up from nature. Postmodern thinkers have sometimes assumed that there is a critical kernel in the individual because it reveals the totalitarian manipulations to which the mass is exposed (Malgré Tout 72). However, mass and individual are politically close. In order for a collection of individuals to become a mass, there has to be a social dynamic that serializes and constructs them as separate from each other. On the other hand, when the traditional Marxist left suppresses individualism by subsuming the individual in the collective, de-individualization is lived as a loss, a
sacrifice in the present that will be rewarded with a world of plenitude \textit{at the end} of the struggle. In this sense, the mass is a negation of the individual but also a recreation of the effects of serialization.

When individuality remains unproblematized, the passage to the collective consists in bringing together, in the plane of consciousness, the common interests of rational individuals. The collective is thus an agreement between conscious beings, each of them fully autonomous in his or her decisions. A political pedagogy based on these principles seeks effective forms of intervention in the rational processes of individuals. The key concerns are whether people are "convinced" or still have the same opinion. An emancipatory politics built upon these premises will seek to seduce and convince consciousnesses. It will invest in rational arguments and propaganda and become frustrated when it finds that people are not receptive. It will try with a better programme, a more appealing facilitator, or state-of-the-art "subvertising" techniques and designs. It will use alternative media, propose forms of traditional media that circumvent corporate control, screen videos of revolutionary processes, hold lectures by renowned leftist scholars. All those attempts at convincing individuals run against the reality that capitalism does not need to convince anybody. It just works. Its only premise is that each person functions as an individual pursuing her own "interests."

The person thus emerges from the recognition that the individual is constructed by "languages, values, beliefs or myths that he neither created nor controls" (Malgré Tout 72). We take a stance as persons when we fully assume that, as human beings, we are immediately (and inevitably) bonded to each other by a continuum of words, affects and desires, a common sense that produces us as social beings before we develop any consciousness. The person acknowledges the concrete compositions of which she is part, her immersion in the values, social identifications, rituals and roles that in capitalism produce individualization: "[T]he individual is a fiction, a label. The person, on the other hand, is each one of us, but on the condition that we open our eyes to the reality of our belonging to this substantive whole that is the world" (Red de Resistencia Alternativa 229). Becoming a person is a first step to identify the point of rupture in the situation, a political act, an instance of thought. There is no freedom in an individual's ability to have
different opinions. The person acts freely as her practice is oriented to transform the common sense of which she is part.

Antipedagogical militants are committed to changing life, not consciousnesses. The concept of changing life differs from the metapolitical idealization according to which the truth of life would emerge when what keeps it in the realm of the false is swept out of the way. It also differs from the postmodern reaction to the attack on life: the withdrawal into life conceived as survival amidst capitalist structures, the resignation to tranquilizing certainties without expecting any substantial political change. A call to adapt life to the transformations usually referred to as neoliberalism, post-Fordism and globalization emerged after the 1970s among former leftists, such as the British New Times movement, the French nouveau philosophes, and other groups (Dyer-Witheford 58-9; Badiou, Ethics; Rancière On the Shores). Many of these intellectuals became the advisors and politicians that staffed the Third Way administrations, from Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, and Gerhard Schröder to Brazil’s Fernando Cardoso and Argentina’s Fernando de la Rúa. In contrast, a commitment to changing life is the decision to take responsibility for the situations we inhabit when we act freely. As Benasayag and Sztulwark argue, freedom exists only as an act, not as a state (199-200). In this sense, being a militant in a situation has to do with an existential practice. Conscious reason can account for only part of it.

To conceive the reality of the person as multiple, heterogeneous and contradictory is to assume the full dimension of the compositions of which we are part. In this sense, Benasayag and Sztulwark suggest, once we have discarded its use to define a “mode of production” or a social formation, we can reserve the term communism to name “the tendency, the desire of potentia itself … that wager on—and for—life that, in each situation, carries us toward solidarity, justice, critical thought, and creation” (159). The person is multiple, richer than the individual insofar as its boundaries are not closed by the conscious “I.” Unlike the individual, whose life is mere survival (in the sense that it is reduced to the single dimension of needs fulfilled by the market), the person lives a multidimensional life that is more than biological existence. However, to be more than its biological aspect, life cannot be multidimensional in the sense that its multiple dimensions are put to work, forced to participate in a marketplace as bearer of a difference. When multiplicity acquires use value, life is still reduced to survival.⁶⁸
The actualization of the compositions of which she is part allows the person to inhabit the situation. In contrast, the individual is supposed to be able to leave one situation and enter another while remaining unaltered. As an isolated “free” particle, the individual can, through a rational choice, inhabit the situations he or she desires and remain unchanged. The person, on the other hand, is inseparable from the situation where her life unfolds. She is responsible—albeit unconsciously—for the situation she inhabits and cannot avoid problematizing it because she and her situation constitute each other.

The passage from individual to person is not spontaneous. It involves the identification of the bonds that produce individuality, a process that does not operate through the work of consciousness but rather proceeds through both thought and action in the situation. It implies a transformation, in other words, of the compositions of bodies and ideas that produce the individual.

This is the transformation that Spinoza conceived as the passage between what he called the first and second kinds of knowledge (Deleuze, Expressionism 289-301; Spinoza, Ethics II, p. 40-41). Spinoza recognized three kinds of knowledge, which are actually three modes of existence or forms in which understanding (which, for him, comprise experiences of both the mind and the body) defines life. Knowledge of the first kind is essentially composed of inadequate ideas, those that have an external cause, of which we are spectators. It contains ideas that can easily turn into abstract universals. A mode of existence such as this is defined entirely by ideas, not by the multiple determinations of affects and desires. Here thought appears only as a conscious process. It does not have to do with how bodies relate to each other.

The passage to knowledge of the second kind involves precisely the development of ideas and affects of which we are the cause. The path is guided by the formation of what Spinoza defined as common notions, ideas and practices in common formed by a concrete level of agreement between bodies whose result is the respective expansion of their potentiae. We are in the middle of the political kernel of Spinozan ethics, the path that needs to be followed by anyone committed to an investigation into what bodies can do. The formation of common notions is a process by which we investigate our situation, seeking to understand the compositions of which we are part in their contradictory multiplicity. This investigation involves explorations—which we undertake with both our
consciousness and our body—of our relations to others. Individuals come under consideration as systems of relations, that is, as persons.

The third kind of knowledge differs from the second in its relation to universality (which, in Spinoza, appears in the figure of God or the substance). Knowledge of the third kind starts at the concrete level of the common notions, but is immediately universal and eternal. It is the knowledge of the universal that is found in the singularity—the concrete universal, infinity as experienced in the effectuation of potentia.

The times we live in are dominated by what Spinoza defined as sad passions. People withdraw into individuality for many reasons: the monotony and boredom of work and consumption, the perception that nothing can be done, that we are mere spectators, only capable of being acted upon by forces beyond our control. Ours is a time of uncertainty and anguish, increasing precariousness at work and in life in general, punctuated by many other forms of insecurity. There is a direct relationship between the generalized sadness that comes attached to spending more and more time doing what we need to ensure our basic survival and the increased individuation that arises from the fear and insecurity of everyday precariousness. Under these conditions, no matter how good the Party programme, how insightful the academic article or realistic the alternative documentary film, people tend to be an expression of the forces that affirm their individuality.

Benasayag and Sztulwark argue that a truly revolutionary politics for our times must deconstruct the individual and assert the person or, in other words, disregard all forms of consciousness-raising, even the more dialogical ones, and embrace the construction of concrete common notions. The point is not to change the consciousness of the oppressed, but rather to accompany the creation of new forms of life in which they are involved.

Arguably, the emergence of Argentina's new protagonism before, during, and after the revolt of 2001 was the outcome of the patient formation of common notions to escape the neoliberal pattern of individuation (Zibechi, Genealogía). Coextensive with the structural passage from a society organized by the state to one organized by the market in Argentina was the affirmation of individualism in middle-class neighbourhoods by consumption, withdrawal into intimacy, and fear of exclusion. The sense of insecurity in public places paved the terrain for the proliferation of gated communities and increased police surveillance. Outside the home, everybody looked suspicious or appeared as a
competitor in a race for survival in which nobody, except politicians, corporate managers, and media stars, seemed to be winning. The middle-class feared the poor and the poor feared the police. In the slums, where the police regularly tortured and killed people randomly (as it still does today), fear was a palpable presence.

The production of common notions was a process in which people had to overcome this alienated and hostile sociality by breaking the subjective walls that make them experience their neighbours as strangers. For both the middle-classes and the unemployed workers, the process of producing new types of bonds involved a subjective operation in which the neighbourhood ceased to be passively occupied by individuals and came to be inhabited in an active way by persons (Colectivo Situaciones, 19 y 20 169). Middle-class neighbours created popular assemblies that took care of numerous activities, from coordinating protests to demanding the resignation of politicians, judges, and legislators, to running alternative media and organizing solidarity activities with the scavengers.

In relation to the individual, the person exists as a subtraction. Individualism is a crystallization of mechanisms that identify, define a part in a classification assigned with certain roles, establish a centre from where to see the world. Persons, on the other hand, are full members of the situations they inhabit, when concrete existence becomes, here and now, an expression of humanity (Benasayag and Sztulwark 164). A person inhabits a situation insofar as she is a local suspension of the subjectivity of the individual, made possible in the process of building common notions. A person is someone who participates with others in putting in practice the inherently human capacity to think collectively beyond the common sense of the situation, to declare infinite what is otherwise seen as One; the capacity to make history, to change the world.

Because it is always a matter of potentia, not of identities, individual and person are tendencies, becomings. Both tendencies coexist and are irreducible to one another. It is not possible to arrive at a state of non-alienation. As Benasayag and Charlton put it, “action and state always represent that undissociable pair of the two levels of thought and of life, none subsumable by the other” (199). We can be either on the side of the state (whose categories are knowledge, police, consciousness, the individual, consistency) or on the side of the real movement, of potentia (whose categories are thought, politics, desire, the eccentric and always partial status of the body, the person, multiplicity).
The Two and the Multiple

When radical change presumes seizing the state, politics remains confined to the terrain of representation. The unity of antagonism beyond the local situations results from the pedagogical production of an alternative, oppositional One—a "good" One—that would oust the "bad" One. The result is a split of the pedagogical space. Where there was One, there are now Two, an "antagonistic scission." Two camps, external in relation to each other, united by mutual destruction until one of them finally triumphs (Badiou, The Century 58-67). When conceived as one side of this pair, emancipation requires an agent that can give consistency to the One on its side. In order to defeat its enemy, it needs a pedagogy that creates a transcendental bond, for the multiplicity of struggles, in this perspective, is a dispersion that lacks the strength and organization to take control of the state. In this regard, the traditional distinction between reformists and revolutionaries is of little importance. Both see the world to change from the separate point of view of representation.

The reduction of struggle to dialectic antagonism follows the model of war. In the epic model, the forces of liberation pull together all their resources to liberate humankind from oppression. The antagonistic camp needs to maximize its offensive capacity. It needs a vanguard, who, like the general staff, supervises the big strategies and enforces discipline, and it needs foot soldiers sinking their boots deep in the mud of the battlefields of daily struggles, seeking to turn "political" those fights that are still merely "economic" or "social." Happy to be at least the rearguard, the sympathizers are still ahead of the "backward" masses.

Defeating the enemy requires uniting forces to strike with homogeneous and concentrated might, as if with a clenched fist. Taking power demands the subordination of means to ends, of tactics to strategy. The multiple forms of being and the capacity for experimentation that appear in the course of struggles need to be subordinated—in the political imagination of the vanguard—to a single plan.

Under this light, the only serious struggles—and the only valid aspect of any struggle—are those which enter the radar screen of the plans to capture the state. As Gramsci puts it, "the political party, for all groups, is precisely the mechanism that carries out in civil society the same function as the State carries out, more synthetically and over
a larger scale, in political society (15). The party is a more efficient state than the State itself, “within its field the political party accomplishes its function more completely and organically than the State does within its admittedly far larger field” (16). The production of political consistency forces an instrumentalization of the forms of resistance. Grassroots democracy loses value as the way of relating to each other that is part of the culture of the new movements to become a “participation method,” a way of presenting those topics that are considered the serious part of popular education: knowledges that respond to a particular way of conceiving politics (MTD Solano and Colectivo Situaciones, Maestro Ignorante). A hierarchy of struggles replaces the multiple becomings of multiple resistances. Some struggles—those of the working class, for instance—are considered to make a greater contribution to the revolution, while others are barely worthy of attention or irrelevant. Situated acts of refusal become the building blocks of the war machine that will conquer power. As Holloway suggests, “once the logic of power is adopted, the struggle against power is already lost” (Change the World 17). Instrumentalization is inherent in the idea that social change occurs through taking state power.

Perhaps borrowing the expression from Badiou (Being and Event 410), Colectivo Situaciones calls political forcing “the blind belief that society can be changed from above by a decided will” (“Por una política” 27). The bond created in the course of forcing the disorganized and unshaped multiplicity of antagonism into “legible” and recognizable subjects can function smoothly within the only sphere of action where politics is assumed to take place. The scission into Two is symmetrical. Yet a great deal of resistance is asymmetrical to domination.

Consider, for instance, the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, an Argentinean human rights organization created in 1977, when military repression was most intense. Mothers grew up not from strategic plans but from below: from the pain of mothers seeking to recover their children who had been kidnapped, tortured, and “disappeared” by the state. Because they have not separated affects from political activity, Mothers never consider each other means toward ends. Nobody has to be subordinated to strengthen the organization (Zibechi, Genealogía 41-3). Rather, they regard each other as ends in themselves. What bonds them together is not an idea but the affect, love and friendship that arises from
supporting each other, sharing intimate emotions, moments of joy and sorrow. They organize themselves through consensus, understood not as a system of decision-making or conflict resolution, but as a direct engagement with the lives of one another. As in a now long established feminist tradition, for them the personal is political. Mothers guide themselves by an ethics of intimate conviction whose exercise cannot be detached from everyday life. They have a profound distrust of ideologies and party lines and are proud of their autonomy from the state, political parties, unions and NGOs. Their autonomy does not consist in fighting against a dominant ideology, which might summon the need for the specialized knowledge of a vanguard party, but rather, as Zibechi suggests, in the affirmation of liberating aspects of popular culture that already exist among them. In Mothers, as in many other situational movements, there is no symmetry between their struggle and capitalist organization.

The classical (Leninist) political activist is convinced that it is possible to take a shortcut, bypassing the situations “in the name of the truly ‘serious’, namely the ‘sphere of the political’” (Colectivo Situaciones, “Por una política” 27). The traditional vanguard militant operates as a know-it-all that blesses the models of struggle that guarantee success. What happens locally is valuable only when it has global effects, that is, when it affects the national situation or even the world situation. The local situation is a piece in the puzzle of the totality of antagonism.

**From the Winter Palace to the Bastille**

In their raw form resistances are unclassifiable, hard to distinguish from life itself. As they become part of “serious” politics, their reduction to a single dimension is unavoidable. The concrete exigencies of the real movement become abstract in the effort to articulate lived experiences to spectacular politics.

When politics is viewed from the perspective of the state, the struggles of, for instance, women, the unemployed, or landless peasants only have instrumental or transitive value. If they are considered at all, it is because it is believed that they can be put under the centralizing embrace of a party or a front, the best means to channel their agency into the realm of “real” politics. Not only does the vanguard occupy a spectacular space in relation to situations, it also operates within a spectacular perspective of time: its urgencies are not the local urgencies of movements and people in struggle. As Benasayag
and Sztulwark suggest, a “situational militant falls in the trap of the ‘urgent’ … when he or she abandons the slow work of construction of counterpower,” with the consequence of devitalizing the process of liberation and “removing from it its power (potencia)” (111).

Ideologies reach each situation as idealizations. The exigency of conforming to a priori ideals and identities, which, even if not in the form of a party but only of a label such as “Marxist,” “Trotskyist,” “Leninist,” “social-democrat,” or even “autonomist” or “situationist,” destroys the rich, multiple, and contradictory reality of the experiences of resistance (Colectivo Situaciones, “Further Comments”). As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, whenever relations are considered to take place between global or molar units (e.g. between groups who claim to adhere to a certain political figure or to be representative of a certain ideology), there are numerous connections that are presupposed, but never explained (Anti-Oedipus 181-3). To avoid this, the only relations that should be taken into account are those which do not presuppose the consistency of the whole.

The superior knowledge of the vanguard derives from its purported capacity for seeing ahead and understanding the situation better than those who are part of it. It turns the vanguard into the smart head of a dumb body in need of orientation and command. Of course, with some exceptions, membership in the vanguard is not acquired by birthright. Building the vanguard is a process that requires pulling people out of their local situations—the shop floor of a factory, the hallways of the university, or the grassroots neighbourhood organization, for instance. Once they acquire the global vision of the vanguard they are promoted to party or union membership and thus uprooted from their situation. From this position, they no longer regard their situation from a perspective “from and for the situation, but from the imaginary position of the ‘observer’” (Benasayag and Sztulwark 103). The vanguard, then, becomes an abstract universal, a mirror-image of capitalist spectacular unification, incapable of being faithful to the multiplicity of bonds, affects, and fidelities that are produced in the situation. Separation from concrete forms of life in the situations condemns the Party’s grassroots militants to impotence.

The ideas of the vanguard are inadequate, in Spinoza’s terms. An inadequate idea cannot, by any means, expand the potentia of the members of the situation. Potentia is
always in actu; its flow is multiple, and therefore immanent and unclassifiable. Any attempt to harness it from outside ossifies it. This is why, by affirming that nobody knows what a body can do, Spinoza asserted that the flow of potentia cannot be discerned or classified; it is thought that cannot be subordinated to knowledge, the configuration of inadequate ideas. Anyone who claims to know what a body can do starts from predefined essences and identities, interrupting the flow of potentia from the pseudouniversal position of an external observer.

Only from an external, central place of power is it possible to know what bodies can do. That knowledge, however, indicates what they can no longer do. The central power of the state is, in reality, a site of maximum impotence (impotentia) from the point of view of carrying out radical change, as many revolutionaries and reformists, from Salvador Allende to Lula, have realized after “taking power.” Rather, the affirmation of this power comes at the cost of diminishing the potentia of the situation, interrupting its flow by policing what the bodies can and cannot do. In reality, by itself this power cannot do anything to change the world because in the world there is nothing else but the real movement: “the grassroots are all that there is” (Colectivo Situaciones, Hipótesis 101). The power that affirms itself in representation can only do so at the expense of the potentiae of the multiple situations. Today’s pragmatic progressive politicians have learned the lesson—their instinct tells them that they should be careful not to expose the powerlessness of representation, which they do by simply no longer pretending that they will change the world from the position of government.

In certain cases, when the real movement expands its potentia, state power can express that positive tendency. But all that can be done from the state is the management of what has been created by politics. Politics is dynamic: it is thought and practice of the multiple. No attempt to circumscribe multiplicity within a parallel state run by a party, a union, a bloc, or a front, or directly from the state, can synthesize the contradictions and situations that give life to politics. There is no adjustment between the state and politics because the latter entails a revolt against the structures of representation policed by the former. There is politics only in the act that modifies common sense and disrupts knowledge, in the thought that invents new bonds, practices, and relations. It remains politics, not police, as long as it does not adopt the logic of the state.
Benasayag and Charlton argue that the symbol of what politics can do is not the capture of the Winter Palace by the Bolsheviks, but the storming of the Bastille by the commoners (194). The event that commemorates the French Revolution was only the culmination of a process that lasted many decades, during which the bonds and relations within society were deeply altered. When the revolution took place, the Bastille was almost empty, perhaps a symbol of the insubstantiality of representation. Common sense, as the ensemble of knowledges that organized peoples’ lives had irreversibly changed. To think critically in revolutionary France was the equivalent of demolishing previous knowledge and inventing a new world. Only a rupture—multiple ruptures—of this kind can overcome capitalism (Guattari 8).

A rupture like this does not depend on a well organized and convinced group of activists. Revolutionaries focused on taking state power sustain their conviction across time by keeping in mind the moment of rupture they will achieve at the end of the road. A linear perception of time organizes this kind of political commitment. But if a wide process of rupture depends on a much larger transformation of the situations, this vision of time collapses. The struggle is no longer oriented toward freedom in the future, but the struggle itself is the moment of freedom (Mattini 27; Malgré Tout 58-61). Freedom cannot be a state. It is always a free act here and now. The real contribution to a revolution of the type that has been described is the expansion of potentia in different situations. The actions that expand potentia have value in themselves; they are not transitive. There is no final goal beyond the activity that liberates. Nor is there the position of a pedagogue that classifies, builds hierarchies, and adapts struggles for the big moment of rupture.

Escaping Consciousness through Communication and Relativism

Since the last decade of the twentieth century, the possible answers to the question what is politics have been narrowed down to one: consensual democracy. The politics of rupture according to which change can result from taking control of the state apparatuses gave way to consensus after catastrophic collapses (as in Eastern Europe), reconversions to market economy (as in China) or severe repression (as in Latin America). Many former revolutionaries reacted to the catastrophes of modern determinism, the marriage of reason and historical necessity, by embracing the postmodern creed: we are at the end of history
and parliamentary democracy is the final and finished form of organization of human societies—there is nothing else to be done. In this context, parliamentarism is barely more than the impasse of “there is no alternative” to market society and the desired configuration for “rogue states” after the collateral damage of the humanitarian bombing campaign has been cleaned up.

As Colectivo Situaciones puts it, consensual politics is what happens within a structured “public sphere that is stable enough so that the only thing that changes are its contents” (“Por una política” 27). Provided that the mechanisms of dialogue remain unaltered, social groups can freely exchange opinions. Consensual democracy seems to have long forgotten the demos. Rather, the multitudes are an obstacle that the representatives tolerate with disgust.

To qualify actually existing democracy as consensual is, by no means, to imply that there is the possibility of a truly democratic society and that such a possibility is being negated by some more or lesss obscure mechanism of domination. In a society, real democracy can only exist as a fiction, for, as Rancière suggests, “real democracy would presuppose that the demos be constituted as a subject present to itself across the whole surface of the social body” (On the Shores 39). The demos is not an objective and continuously existing substance that is evenly distributed throughout society. It is, rather, the outcome of a distortion that comes into existence when a part of society that is not counted as a part claims its existence as a part. Only in the presence of this disagreement are we in the presence of democracy. Democracy, therefore, cannot be the qualifier that we can attach to a given society, for it cannot be One. The notion of liberal democracy, on the other hand, presupposes the fiction of the individual’s ability to exercise rational choice to evaluate his private interests and decide between benefits and costs in the public sphere. The socialist tradition denounced liberal democracy as a dream until their own fiction collapsed and many within its ranks came to accept liberal democracy as an unescapable fate.

In order for liberal democracy to live up to its own fiction, it needs to determine with precision the parts that take part in the participation. Hence the strict counting of the traits and features of individual subjectivity, upon which institutions intervene by administering rewards and punishments. Consensus is the result of precise counting of parts that takes
place in actually existing liberal democracy. Its operation is necessary to accomplish the always imperfect task of preventing the emergence of an unforeseeable demos that can claim its right to speak on its own behalf. Individuals and classes can exist in consensual order as long as their borders are properly defined. This is not an easy task, but rather one that requires the ongoing hard work of experts, those who can name realities just as they are, unequivocally, and are thus deemed the most capable in the administration of the most diverse needs. Consensus is also fond of numbers. It needs numbers to determine the statistical aggregation of parts, but it also needs them to establish the legitimacy of the representatives by determining those parts as finite sets (therefore not infinite, but one-dimensional) and by fastening them to the construction according to which the majority represents the general will.\(^69\)

The notion of democracy cannot go unqualified in these cases. I reserve democracy, as an unqualified term, for the ephemeral and unpredictable acts of invention of the real movement. For, as Rancière points out,

"the guarantee of permanent democracy is not the filling up of all the dead times and empty spaces by the forms of participation or of counterpower; it is the continual renewal of the actors and of the forms of their actions, the ever-open possibility of the fresh emergence of this fleeting subject" (On the Shores 61).

An implicit rule of consensual democracy is that politics and economics occur in separate spheres. This separation, as Holloway argues, "is central to the exercise of domination under capitalism" (Change the World 32). Since the rule of law is favourable to the stability of the economy, parliamentarism—regardless of the contents of the debates—is essentially conservative. Another, perhaps more explicit, rule is that market economics is the foundation of human sociality. Consensualist politicians and experts understand the current market conditions as a quasi-natural limit for what politics can accomplish (Lewkowicz, Cantarelli, et. al. 103-5). The free market is an ontological condition to which there is no remedy but to adapt.

Consensus is enslaved to opinion—the basic stuff of communication—and removed from any conception of thought that presupposes rupture with common sense. From an ethical vision of the world, the only function of opinion is to be part of linguistic exchange. Language carries no truth. Opinion is neither true nor false (Badiou, Ethics 51).
Nothing in the world of opinion leads us out of it. Making consensus stronger only results in legitimizing the sophistry of professional politicians and journalists.

Jürgen Habermas has produced perhaps the most refined identification of politics with consensus. His political philosophy advocates a conception of reason that evolves as it approaches the ideal speech situation of communicative action oriented toward mutual understanding. Habermas rejects the modern theory of the individual subject and the paradigm of consciousness associated with it. In its place, he proposes the intersubjectivist dimension of communicative rationality. While subject-centered reason privileges “the objectifying attitude in which the knowing subject regards itself as it would entities in the external world,” the paradigm of communicative action is intersubjective because it privileges “the performative attitude of participants in interaction, who coordinate their plans for action by coming to an understanding about something in the world” (Philosophical Discourse of Modernity 296). Habermasian politics exists within consensus because, for him, politics and the exchange of opinions belong to the same order. Politics is reduced to the public exercise of judgement (Badiou, Metapolitics 10-25).

Communicative rationality omits considering that what is at stake politically, before the first word is uttered, is the status of the speakers. As Rancière puts it, in any conversation what is really brought to the table is whether the speakers recognize each other as subjects in a shared world of argumentation; whether they are included in the count or not. What is at stake is whether a part of society that has no part in the counting of the community as One speaks or just makes noise (Disagreement 49-50). Among those only making noise, some notable historical examples include workers in Western Europe before the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, feminists before the 1960s, Mexican indigenous peoples before January 1994, and Argentinean unemployed workers before they became piqueteros in March-April 1997.

This critique of communicative rationality is different from the argument that Jean-François Lyotard famously deployed against Habermas in The Postmodern Condition. Lyotard argued that Habermas’ ideal rational community of communication is not only conformist and even impossible without state violence, but also impossible, because it runs against the real incommensurability and multiplication of language games in highly
developed societies. Rather, what Rancière argues is that there is emancipatory politics only when a subject raises the claim that the dialogue is actually a monologue, implicitly or explicitly exposing that the pretended community of discourse does not actually exist. The established order pronounces its monologue constructing the stage in such way that it does not even acknowledge that the subaltern speak. Politics makes its appearance only when the dominated ignore such construction, modifying in the process of their manifestation the regime under which they were invisible. The subject that makes its appearance in this way upsets the distributions of roles and functions, the established partitions of society, and the places assigned to each in the community. The form of appearing of the demos is a scandal because it upsets the way in which communicative exchange takes place within the situation. It is a clash between equality and the order of police that redistributes bodies, ways of saying, doing and being. According to Rancière, democracy, then, “is not a discussion between partners but an interlocution that undermines the very situation of interlocution” (Disagreement 100). Democracy maintains a relation to emancipation as long as it refers to the manifestation of a subject that has nothing to do with either the state or an identifiable part of the society.

Contemporary consensual democracies enforce social harmony by keeping an iron fist on those who defy the untouchable principles on which it is based. Disciplinary society is scaled up with the methods of the society of control. Through its diffusion in the play of state apparatuses and social interests, conflict disappears from center stage. The word ‘democracy’, as Badiou argues, today concerns a form of authoritarian opinion: “it is forbidden, as it were, not to be a democrat.” Moreover, “any subjectivity suspected of not being democratic is regarded as pathological. At best it refers to a patient re-education, at worst to the right of military interventions by democratic paratroopers” (Metapolitics 78). Thus, from the point of view of consensus, ‘class’ is not the name of a distortion produced by a subject that raises a claim of equality, but an administrative concept that discerns a part of the whole. Seen in this way, class refers to classifications of already constituted partitions of the social One, whose interests are understandable in relation to the social and economic structure. Interests, in turn, are representable by political parties, labour unions, opinion groups, and non-governmental organizations. The task of politicians is to reconcile those interests with the interest of the state, whose function is to
balance the conflicting interests and prevent rupture. Class, in this sense, codifies the meanings of struggles in terms of political representation. This view of class underlies the paradigm of consciousness in the most positivist versions of Marxism. When conceived as an identity, class differs from caste only in that the former is a decoded form of the latter (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 254).

Classes qua castes are perfectly compatible with postmodern cultural relativism and its celebration of the “liberation of differences” (Vattimo, *Transparent Society* 9). By seeking refuge from abstract universals in the local, postmodernists consider situations as if they were completely isolated from one another. Redefined in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, language, disability, cultural taste, etc., situations become the reign of pure particularity. Relativism attempts to flee spectacular democracy by throwing out the baby of universalism with the bathwater of abstraction. It abandons the marriage between determinism and historical necessity to proclaim the supreme rule of the fragment, difference, and otherness. Consensual democracy does not lose face by progressively cheering multiculturalism because it helps keep in place the abstract homogenization over which the latter claims to have triumphed. As long as differences relate to each other as equivalencies, the collective bond that results from market fragmentation receives a cheerful endorsement that reaffirms its institutions of police (Benasayag and Sztulwark 105; Rancière, *Disagreement* 105).

Neither recognition of differences nor affirmation of multiculturalism are, by themselves, guarantees of emancipatory politics; that is, of the transformative thought that punctures a hole in the status quo of the situation. In a “progressive” consensual democracy, the respect for differences and the self-representation of minorities find their finest expression. The greater complexity of the social totality that this means justifies the arbitration mechanisms of consensus, which become “the negation of the democratic basis for politics” insofar as situations are turned into “well-identifiable groups with specific interests, aspirations, values, and ‘culture’” (Rancière, “Dissenting Words” 125). This way of understanding the multiple situations—as identifiable, classifiable, and countable; in sum, finite—is the consistent One of consensus reproduced by the multicultural form of a society conceived as “groups performing specific functions and occupying determined spaces” (124).
The pedagogy of consensus is a mechanism of production of political truths, which are not very different from those that result from capturing the state by force; precisely the ones progressive consensual democrats so much wanted to leave behind. Those who believe that the key to emancipatory politics lays in engineering a just society after taking power construct organizations (parties, political fronts) that interpret what is valuable in any grassroots struggle according to its capacity to impact in the totality. Consensual democrats, on the other hand, accept as politically valid only those demands that are "formulated under a publicly acceptable format and a codified language" (Colectivo Situaciones, “Por una politica” 28). The institutionalization of forms of dialogue in consensual democracy expropriates the potentiæ whose only mode of existence is the concrete form of the act by which they exist. Opinion polls, ballots, referenda, and other similar mechanisms numb—or, as Jacotot would say, stultify—potentia in the immanent form of its existence.

Regardless of their “anti-capitalist” content, many activist efforts that seek to convince the majority about how harmful capitalism is to their interests, sometimes using sophisticated techniques of seduction, awe-inspiring multimedia devices, and definitive films on the sick nature of the multinational corporation, fail to question the form of consensus. Rather, they produce a spectacular critique of the spectacle: images and discourses that enter a regime of circulation not much unlike the circulation of money and commodities in the market. These critiques confirm consensus as a norm whose functioning presupposes an individual-spectator, a consciousness to awaken, and a master who explicates real interests through communication techniques. Yet, it is precisely the interruption of the types of relations that produce us as individuals what suspends capitalism at the level of its subjective, material basis of support.

Phenomenology of Representation: Beyond the Pedagogy of Consciousness

Both Leninism and consensus recognize the state as the centre of political activity. In consequence, only some privileged spaces of thought and action fall within the realm of politics. The result is the organization of a space of visibility, a perception of subjects and objects in terms of their value for a particular idea of what politics is. Thus, there are
certain activities, performed by certain bodies, which, under certain circumstances and places, qualify as political.

Consensus, as Colectivo Situaciones points out, formats the "the multiple character of the social," making intelligible the otherwise obscure forces of society according to how they fit within certain analytical categories and forms of action (19 y 20 82). Representation has to be produced: thoughts, gestures and activities need to be processed according to an already given answer to the question what is politics. Without the dedicated labour of intellectual and political elites—it is believed—the social multiple lacks the capacity of self-determination. Parties, unions, and similar organizations act inside the structure of roles, classifications and hierarchies set out by the state. They constitute themselves as representatives of underlying tendencies—economic, cultural, social, etc.—and aspire to dominate the political totality and articulate all the other parts under their hegemony.71

As Zibechi points out, several grassroots groups in Argentina fell into the trap of pursuing organization as an end in itself (Genealogía 113-15). Perhaps the most notable example are the piqueteros. Originally a the multiple and diverse collection of sites of resistance that could hardly be recognizable as a single movement, the piqueteros were produced as a legible actor, to some extent, by the patient labour of the media and the state apparatuses, but most significantly by the models they took from parties of the left and progressive unionists.

The Argentinean state was forced to recognize the existence of the piqueteros in 1997, when the unemployed of the privatized national oil company began to block the roads to stop production in the oil fields from which they had been fired. The roadblock method was soon adopted by hundreds of different groups in cities around the country. And so was the identity of piqueteros (“road blockers”) taken up by multiple different groups. Respect of diversity, grassroots democracy, and loose connections were founding characteristics of these series of movements and the source of the vigor and creativity that helped them become an uncontrollable threat to the continuity of neoliberal policies, right at the moment when progressive politicians were trapped between the impotence of consensus, already experiencing the first cracks, and the requirement to comply with the dictates of the International Monetary Fund.
The tradition of militant unionism sought to capitalize the unleashed power of the movement. But, in the process, the unionist culture dissolved the multiplicity of many groups that considered themselves *piqueteros* in their own way, turning each of them, with the singularities of the neighbourhood and the people that compose it, into an actor that participates in the national conjuncture, a piece among others in the chessboard of consensus. As Colectivo Situaciones suggests, the subjectivity thus constituted was the product of removing, both physically and affectively, the *potentia* of each group from its situation to subject it to the requirements and schedule of the forces that operate from the perspective of One single situation. For this global worldview, those who inhabit each situation can find meaning for their struggle only by confirming the available “socially instituted forms of legitimacy” (19 y 20 94). The struggle of the sector of piqueteros that adopted this position became a struggle for inclusion.

In spite of their self-presentation as hard liners, those whose *raison d’etre* is to seize the state through a revolution had an effect in the absorption of the struggle of *piqueteros* in consensual democracy. For the most part concentrated in the construction of the Party, these groups infer the status of the unemployed as subjects from the political economic analysis of the conjuncture. Each situation appears to this perspective as never complete in itself. To become an actor in national politics demands the unification of forces to dispute the control of the state. In this light, multiplicity appears under the negative connotation of dispersion of forces, an obstacle to overcome. Collective reflection at the grassroots becomes secondary and subordinated to those activities that are considered the serious business of revolutionaries. Once the multiple is turned into a consistent One, made representable, there can be leaders talking on behalf of what hitherto existed as multiplicity. The energies of the representable become the object of administration of those who take a role as representatives. Multiplicity no longer expresses a series of subtractive forms of dissent, but rather becomes manageable within the objective and univocal terrain of politics understood as consensus.

The production and management of the *piquetero* identity by the state, unionists, and “revolutionaries” diluted the richness and intensity of these series of movements. It made their resistance readable from the different conceptual grids to which the movement has had to conform. Whether it is a political-economic analysis inspired in any of the
different Marxisms, neoclassical economics, or anything in between matters little when the outcome is the reduction of the singularity of each situation to elements in global readings and conjunctural analysis. A series of creative practices were reduced to demands of unemployed workers asking the government to solve the shortage of jobs, just as consensual democrats reduce the demands of workers to raising wages, those of students to lowering education costs and increasing admission, those of women to a more comprehensive welfare system, those of the illiterate for schooling, and so on. A group characterized as excluded finds itself reduced to being a subject of needs, without any possibility of embracing a politics that upsets the distributions of bodies into given functions and spaces. A politics that seeks to satisfy those needs will only amount to an inclusion of the excluded in a subordinate position. It will only confirm both their exclusion and the perception according to which being included (in wage labour) is the desirable outcome, reinforcing the legitimacy of the norm that decides who is excluded and why (the law of value).

The point of departure for pedagogies of consciousness is a model of revolution, an ideal of society, a model revolutionary subject, the myth of progress, or a revolutionary programme. The revolutionary commitment to a model of action is a resistance to think the world from a situation, or, which is the same, it is to think as if the whole world is only One situation. Liberated from their situation, activists and intellectuals can roam from struggle to struggle, theorize on national and world events, and supply the oppressed with strategic views, party lines, and blueprints for action.

A critique of the criticism grounded in this global vision need not be a dismissal of ideas or intellectuals, let alone the argument that we already have enough “theory” and what we need is more “practice.” It has to be, rather, the recognition that potentia cannot be separated from the flow of desire and the uncertainty of action: bodies think and we don’t know what they can do. Theoretical knowledge can, at best, reason within conditions that are already given. For, as Marx argued, “mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation” (“Preface” 426). But the only thought that thinks the new is the one that challenges those conditions. To do this, thought has to be an
operation of subtraction that suspends, in the situation, both the operation of common sense and the global vision that instrumentally binds local action to speculations about the conjuncture, national or global.

All knowledges run the risk of being abstracted, published, circulated, taught, and considered with utilitarian criteria. Anything can become the raw material of an enlightened pedagogy. Abstraction is a commitment not toward the situation as it is, in its contradictory multiplicity, but to the world as it ought to be. The struggle for justice is not abstract when it fights for equality here and now. To refuse the pedagogical outlook one has to renounce the position of the knower of models, subjects, and essences.

The conception of social change in terms of alternative economic or state models leads to the belief that a just society can be planned, either by taking state power through a revolution or within the rules of consensus. One way or the other, politics becomes the struggle for a better administration, a rearrangement of the parts of the whole from a preconceived vision of how things should work.

However, there are struggles that, following Spinoza, we could call *ethical*, which emancipate themselves from models to focus on the here and now. They construct bonds of different type, in which concrete relations, sustained in common notions, predominate. They produce relations that are not external, as those regulated by a contract, but immanent. A sociality not based in abstraction is not cemented by an ideal; it is built on fraternity and solidarity, consolidated upon a multiplicity of affects. While a contract predetermines relations and can be transmitted through the communication of the content of consciousness, the bonds generated in the situation build upon the compositions of desires, experiences, and practices in action. The relation begins at the level of the physical and practical nature of the encounters. Here, thought is no longer theoretical reason, but a thought of and for the situation that abandons any a priori idealization of subjects, theories, and practices (Colectivo Situaciones, “Something more on Research Militancy” 606). A thought of the body that points to both individual and collective growth.

The search for an alternative sociality is a critique not of concepts but of practices, in particular those of the individual-spectator, both the result and the point of origin of capitalist bonds at the grassroots. The subtraction from the spectacular relations created
by capital does not need models. It only needs to focus on rebelliousness as it already happens in the situation, on clandestine knowledges and forms of resistance that remain hidden and come into view in times of crisis. The question, for situational thought, is neither to organize to take power nor the fruitless demand for inclusion in the regime of consensus, but the creation of a new world: not from below, but just below, without “the vocation to go upwards” (Zibechi, Genealogia 109). The locus of politics is no longer the sphere called “the political”—the state, its institutions, political parties, unions, NGOs, etc. It is eccentric. It does not conceive politics from global categories. It does not presuppose, for instance, that power resides in government palaces, the G8 summits, or in front of television cameras. Removed from the plane of representation, politics is the production of a plane of immanence, “the practical affirmation of an alternative sociality” (Colectivo Situaciones, “Por una política” 33).

The dismissal of political centres and models redirects action to the molecular production of a non-capitalist sociality, conceived as the interruption, in the situation, of the subjective mechanisms that produce capitalism from the bottom up. Subtraction cuts the situation out from the categories and forms of global thinking to let sovereign meanings emerge in a self-sufficient space-time of experience (Colectivo Situaciones, 19 y 20 19; “Por una política” 42). But subtraction is not a return to the local, with the consequent loss of the “big picture.” It is rather the recognition that the whole world expresses itself in the situation. To inhabit the situation entails assuming a commitment to the production of bonds and relations that suspends the contractualist model of the market and the state. This can unleash a power “a thousand times more powerful than the programmes and agreements of classical political groups” (“Por una política” 37). A power with real, material basis; not one that hangs from fine thread of spectacular notions and contractual bonds.

Pedagogical activism thinks and acts from a global perspective (even when acting locally). It knows how the world should be and what it is going to find. It has both the questions and the answers. Antipedagogy renounces any commitments to neat programmes, academic fashions, traditions of ideas, or policies. The production of concrete bonds in the situation can only be approached from ignorance.
The movements and groups that have emancipated themselves from models are inventing a politics that is altogether other. It is a politics aware of the phenomenology of re-presentation, but whose focus is an ethics of resistance, in which groups and movements practice “a counterpower that no longer emerges spontaneously unified, nor does it desire an external, imposed, state-like union” (Colectivo Situaciones, “Further Comments on the Researcher Militant”). It is a politics of detotalization, which responds locally to the centralism and hierarchy of representation and in which each local struggle finds, as Deleuze pointed out, that there is “no need to totalize that which is invariably totalized on the side of power” (“Intellectuals and Power” 78). A politics like this is not a politics of representation but of presentation, whereby that which presents itself—even when it is a single person—preserves the multiplicity of the real.

An ethics of resistance suspends, not as a conscious effort but in the very act of resisting, the “view according to which today’s revolt is validated or justified by a becoming of the world in its globality” (Malgré Tout 58). By abandoning the grand narratives of modernity, postmodern consensual democrats do not escape the global view that characterizes modern revolutionaries. Their vision is as much global insofar as they accept this as the best possible of worlds and reject any serious change because it might put us at the doorstep of barbarism. Neither of these two perspectives sees the situation as complete in itself. The modernists subordinate their actions in the situation to the strategies of the Party, the postmodernists celebrate the situation as a loose fragment unable to alter the impotence of consensual democracy. An ethical politics assumes the situational perspective that we only have access to an incomplete knowledge of reality and considers each situation as complete. Ethics does not subordinate action to the knowledge of the totality. Rather, action becomes singular, deliberately restricted.

The foundation of an ethical politics is the liberation of potentia—liberation, that is, from the centralizing will of the state, from “taking power,” from a superior knowledge that promises to deliver them consciousness, and from any other agent willing to wrap it with an idealized consistency. For an ethical vision of radical social change, justice is not a state or a future condition, but rather it coincides with the act of struggling for it—potentia always exists in the act and never separates from it. The priority of ethical activism is the expansion of potentia. Its concerns are desire, affects and values as the
stuff of which immanent bonds are made. Unlike the politics of identity of cultural relativism, which abandons all claims to universality, an ethical politics asserts multiplicity and non-identity, or even anti-identity (Holloway, *Change the World* 212). Pedagogical communism consists in supporting a party, a programme, a different way of reading economic and political phenomena, an endorsement of this or that Marxism. Antipedagogical communism is defined by the encounter with *potentia* which occurs in the act of resistance that produces fraternal bonds as an affirmation, here and now, of a non-instrumental sociality.
Chapter Four

Immanent Pedagogy: Centred and Eccentric Multitudes

The Paradox of A Democracy

Carlos Menem became president of Argentina on July 9th, 1989, the day of the anniversary of the declaration of independence from Spanish rule. He reigned unchallenged for the next ten years. Because he was not allowed to run again in 1999, the opportunity to depose his seemingly almighty rule, and to undo the sweeping transformation of Argentina into the dearest example of neoliberal economists, opened expectations of change. Menem’s last years had not been easy. Innovative forms of participation and resistance had mushroomed across the country. The 1999 elections, however, did not offer anything new. The options that had real chances of winning were different tonalities of ‘there is no alternative’ (pensamiento único, in Spanish). Any political faction that wanted to remain competitive at the ballots had to offer itself above all as a guarantee of governability. Democracy was a contest between styles of administering free market economics. “Governability” was the euphemism used to announce to both major investors and the general public that anybody or anything desiring to stretch the limits of democracy beyond the consensual corset would have to confront the police batons and the bullets of Gendarmería (Argentina’s militarized police force). Democracy has infinite possibilities when compared to a military dictatorship, but offers very little more than coercion when politics becomes identified with the administration of the possible.

Everything seemed to indicate that the only topic of debate in the campaign was going to be whether people would choose the continuity of corruption (if the winner was Eduardo Duhalde, the aspiring successor to Menem’s throne) or the arrival of transparency, the single promise made by the liberal-social democratic coalition claiming to be the local version of the “third way” that finally won the elections. A few months before election day, with the campaigns running at cruise speed, a small group of people made a surprising appearance that would anticipate the times to come. The group had the intriguing name of 501. It was formed by former activists of left-wing parties who
questioned the relevance, from the point of view of democratic participation, of voting for
one candidate or another.

501's programme was simple. In Argentina voting is mandatory for all adult
citizens. Failure to cast a ballot is (or used to be) punished with delays in obtaining
official documents such as driver's and marriage licenses and passports. There are
exceptions to the rule: those who can prove they were sick on elections day and those
who are more than five-hundred kilometers away from where they are registered to vote.
The 501 group invited citizens to exercise their right to vote against the lack of options
with their feet: be away on elections day. Their campaign was very humble. They used
an email list, a very simple website, and a few flyers. But the disturbance they introduced
in the electoral circus was comparatively very significant. It seemed that many people,
including those who would remain indifferent to left-wing parties, were listening.
Political talk shows—a very popular television genre in Argentina at the time—felt
compelled to invite them. Near the elections almost everybody knew what 501 were
proposing. The reaction of the Marxist left was within the expected when they accused
501 of being cowards for not participating in the contest for power. Intellectuals from left
to right considered 501 and its proposals irresponsible and naïve.

In terms of numbers 501's impact was humble. On election day, only about 300
people accompanied them in their trip of five hundred and one kilometers from Buenos
Aires to Sierra de la Ventana in rented buses. But the questions they sparked continued
underground to reappear as a spontaneous mass movement in the October 2001 elections
(only two months before people ousted De la Rúa), when the spoiled ballots obtained the
majority in Argentina's largest urban centres. In some cases up to 40% of the envelopes
contained a range of objects including cartoon figures, images of Argentina's "founding
fathers," toilet paper, and other more or less creative forms of expression.

In their manifesto, 501 argued that the concept of democracy loses its original
meaning as politics exercised by and for the demos when articulated in the phrase,
common among professional politicians and media spin-doctors, "a democracy," as in, for
instance, "this is a democracy" or "we live in a democracy." The demos is a category of
multiplicity and heterogeneity. It is a concept of the many and the multiple. "There cannot
be, because of the democratic nature of the democratic principle, one single concept of
democracy" (501 qtd. in Lewkowicz 69). Democracy is the government of the many by the many. The article 'a' refers to the demos as a homogeneous reality and, thus, abolishes the many democracies of the many, turning them into One. The demos cannot be other than multiple. Even if it refers to a determinate quantity of people, its becomings are infinite because the possibilities of each life are unforeseeable and beyond measure. They always exceed electoral platforms and government policy. “A democracy” is not democratic and barely hides the authoritarianism inscribed in consensual democracies.

Authoritarianism should not be understood here in a metaphorical sense. As Foucault argued, “beneath the lies that would have us believe that the social body is governed by either natural necessities or functional demands, we must rediscover the war that is still going on, war with all its accidents and incidents” (Society Must be Defended 51). Consensual democracy is a regime of relative peace for some, but a form of state terrorism and (sometimes not so) low intensity warfare for many others, not only for those killed and injured by state repression, but also for the large majorities that voluntarily accept servitude, renouncing the full potential of their existences in exchange for a life of relative peace but certain sadness. There is hardly a democracy whose name is not written with blood. Paraphrasing Walter Benjamin, it is possible to say that whenever there is a democracy, there is simultaneously a document of barbarism.

The homogeneity that “a democracy” designates refers to the ensemble of stable forms of governance that are instrumental to the market’s need to guarantee predictable flows of money, commodities, and labour. When a democracy is in place, neither politics nor the heterogeneity of the unforeseen is at stake on elections day. The options that have chances are usually different forms of police, some offering to guarantee governability with more repression than others. The politics of the many is in contradiction with the closed understanding of democracy in the regimes of consensus. A democratic notion of democracy involves multiple democracies, not a democracy. It seems that a practice of democracy that keeps faith with the politics of the many (the infinite forms of an infinite struggle for justice) can only remain multiple by acting outside representation and its institutions. But, is this possible? Wouldn’t this raw multiplicity degenerate in complete chaos, where warlords replace government and the weak become prey of the strong? Or,
is the fear revealed by a question such as this one the result of our immersion in an order of representation that is unable to conceive the multiple other than as turned into One?

Consensual democracy can only conceive the many as a structured, formatted multiplicity of many ones. What counts as politics, the limit of what is politically acceptable, is strictly codified and inscribed within the territoriality of the state. In relation to the many, the state functions as a guarantee of consistency, a metastructure that polices a given socio-economic structure. State, in this sense, does not refer to public as opposed to private nor is it the other of civil society. The state has a function of bonding, of linkage of the whole. It is the imaginary hegemony of the One. The concern of the state is “to safeguard and restore the unity of the ‘whole’ in the face of floating dispersion” (Cerdeiras, “Manifiesto Político” 82). But politics, as discussed earlier, begins when police ends. Politics is always a dissolution of the bonds the state seeks to preserve. There is politics when there is creation, not just of new bonds, but also of the very conditions that make politics as creation possible. Political thought has to be fundamentally anti-representative: it affirms that “there is nothing to represent” (83).

Only parts that are no longer concerned for the consistency of the whole can practice democracy as the politics of the multiple _qua_ multiple—the non-formatted multiple. In the cartography of non-representational democracy the parts relate to the other parts expressively, without mediation, seeking not to reterritorialize flows in new identities and configurations that obliterate politics and reintroduce police. Following the terms coined by Deleuze and Guattari, one can say that politics is the capacity to outdo the ability of capital to secure new codes, to add new elements to its axiomatic—its structure of containment. Politics can escape pedagogy if it is exercised by the many as many, by a multiplicity that never achieves the consistency of an aggregate whole and that does not posit any part in a central position.

The Multitude and the Imagination of the Multiple

The question of the democracy of the many as many has come under attention in the last decades in the discussions surrounding the rediscovery of the multitude as a political category. As Paolo Virno points out, the category of the multitude “helps to explain a certain number of contemporary social behaviours” (22). While consensual democracy is today the model of governance that saves nation-states from the...
consequences of being considered violators of human rights, numerous political experiments in the recent struggles against the globalization of neoliberalism have opened spaces for the horizontal organization of the many as many.

The political status of the many, a preoccupation of political philosophers at the birth of the modern state, appears again as an open question. For Thomas Hobbes, the multitude referred to an unqualified multiplicity whose lack of consistency threatened the monopoly of political decision held by the state. The many become manageable when conceived as a people, a concept that provides the foundation for the identity of the nation and the contractual basis of the homogeneous will of the state. The civilized multitude becomes a people. As Deleuze points out, in Hobbes’ view the people are human beings who have renounced their natural right, left the state of nature behind for good, and transferred their natural rights to the sovereign, the only citizen—or, more properly, the only function—that does not renounce his or her natural right (En medio 63). Following Spinoza, Paolo Virno sees the multitude and the people as two poles between which the same population can oscillate (Grammar 21-23). The multitude can reappear, manifesting itself in crises and civil wars, when the power of the state is in question. The state is thus the guarantee that the people do not turn into the multitude. The multitude, on the other hand, is anti-state, and therefore the anti-popular and anti-hierarchical, and non-representative form of the many as many.

In the Political Treatise, Spinoza presents the multitude as a conglomerate of singularities that do not renounce their natural right and never subordinate their plurality to the totalization of the One. It is the permanent form of existence of the many as many. The multitude does not abolish the One but defines a different relation—a new way of conceiving the relation—between the One and the many. The state originates in the cession of natural right. Each individual renounces his or her personal affections and has to embrace collective affections. Spinoza keeps the phenomenology of this cession alive. In his formulation natural right is not lost in the civil state, thus opening the possibility of an ethical vision of the world whereby the foundation of all social and political transformation is the activity of the masses as such. Under this light, the multitude does not oppose the One, but rather redefines its foundation and reveals its genealogy. Universality does not require the production of One situation, but rather manifests itself in
concrete forms in each individual. As Virno points out, “the One is no longer a promise, it is a premise.” The whole is a presupposition and “the many must be thought as the individualization of the universal, of the generic, the shared experience” (Grammar 25). In Spinoza’s ontology, the whole (the Substance, God, or Nature) is—and expresses itself—in each mode of existence, in every person and in each situation: “one point is the totality” (Deleuze, En medio 56).

The multitude helps to imagine alternatives to, on the one hand, the looming prospect of the war of all against all that, in Hobbes view, created the need for a powerful state and, on the other, an individualist sociability—the neoliberal utopia of each person as an entrepreneur of him or herself—that inevitably ends in market Darwinism. The category of the multitude reorganizes the distinction between individual and collective in such way that they no longer appear as opposite poles. The multitude is the collective foundation of individual existence and the background that explains every individual as a person, that is, as a multiplicity pierced through by different social flows. In this sense, the concept of the multitude makes possible a departure from liberal ontologies of the social founded in the possessive and selfish individual. This mystified individualism is the foundation of state power or potestas. Although individual being is, in Spinoza, the basic unit of the potentiae of the many whose organization defines potestas, the recognition of the latter does not lead to the closure of the system. As Antonio Negri suggests, in the multitude the individual and the collective are connected to each other in an open dynamic movement. Spinoza believed that “greed and force constitute individual natural right.” But he rejected “the absolute conception of the individual foundation and the absolute conception of the contractual passage.” Instead, he “proposes a physics of society … a mechanics of individual pressures and a dynamics of associative relationships, which characteristically are never closed in the absolute but, rather, proceed by ontological dislocations” (Savage Anomaly 109). The passage from the individual to the collective is a constitutive process.

The category of the multitude is not a new term for the concept of civil society. Hegel conceived civil society as a space of conflict and social dynamism and the state as the realization of civil society. Under this light, the state gives unity to the many while subsuming it. Thus conceived, civil society mediates between the state of nature—
regarded as the unregulated rule of interests and needs—and political society or the state, where the interests of all sectors of society are represented (Hardt, “Withering” 28). The category of the multitude causes the dualism between civil society and the state to fall apart. The underlying presence of the many as many demystifies the view of representational politics that reduces democracy to the mediation of needs by civil society and the sublimation of interests in the rational order of the law and the state.

Gramsci comes closer to conceiving a horizontal organization of the many by explaining the existence of the state as the consequence of an undeveloped civil society. In his view, a fully developed civil society would be able to re-absorb the state within it. The state would be subordinated under the hegemony of civil society. In this sense, as Michael Hardt suggests, Gramsci turns the relation upside down, presenting the state as secondary to civil society (“Withering” 30). A democratic organization of the many could be achieved by strengthening the cultural and economic institutions of civil society. In this way, despotic spaces and functions of the state would be taken over by democratic practices. The organization of civil society needs to be accomplished by the hegemony of a revolutionary class representing the general interest. The road to hegemony takes the form of a “passive revolution,” a “war of positions” over the pedagogical transformation of common sense into good sense waged in the terrain of institutions.

The optimism of this pluralistic conception of the rule of the many clashes with the reality of police. Institutions define a space of governmentality, a topology of the administration of territories, bodies, words, and things and the means of enforcing their relations. They constitute the network through which disciplinary deployments of power are effected upon civil society at a microphysical level. The possibility of reversing the flow of hegemony requires more than reversing the content of institutional practice. It needs the suspension of the striation of the social field effected by the inescapable administration of pedagogy by institutions. Gramsci and Foucault emphasize different aspects of Spinoza’s political philosophy. Gramsci conceives the subordination of state power to the power of the many, but unlike Spinoza, he believes in the pre-eminence of reason. In Foucault, on the other hand, the body and the forces that act upon it come under serious scrutiny, but at the price of de-emphasizing the possibility of the reversal of
the phenomenology, beginning with the expansion of individual potentiae through their compositions as potentia of the many and the formation of counterpowers.

A return to Spinoza, and particularly to his concept of the multitude, has been for contemporary critics and activists such as Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt an opening toward an exploration of a post-hegemonic organization of the many. Fundamental in this return to Spinoza has been the conception of state power or sovereignty (potestas) as a function of the power (potentia) of the multitude. State power is always, as Negri points out, organized as a constitution (Savage Anomaly 202). Constitution, in this sense, refers neither to the written text of the supreme law of the state nor to the state and its institutions. It is, rather, the larger configuration of productive forces and relations, congealed in a certain configuration over a certain period of time. To each generation corresponds a certain constitution. Struggle and crisis, such as, for instance, 1968 in France and 2001-2 in Argentina, mark the transition between one constitution and another. The administration of a certain constitution is the task of police, while the subversion of a constitution is an act of politics.

In Argentina the insurrection had enough force, enough multiplicity, to de-institute the constituted powers without instituting a new one. As Colectivo Situaciones points out, the insurrection set in motion “an assemblage of instituting powers disposed in such way that, far from founding a new sovereign order, [operated] delegitimizing the politics executed in its name” (19 y 20 42). For several months, there was not “a democracy” but many. The passage toward a new constitution has been characterized by the construction of a new legitimacy for sovereign power. Once a new constitution is established, a reactionary moment begins (Negri, “Constituent Republic” 213). Negri’s notion of constituent power seeks to grasp the process of constitution before its closure, while it remains open as a series of combinations of constituent potentiae of the multitude. Thus, constituent power does not become fixed in a state but rather remains in state of flow as a constituent republic.

Unlike the theories of social contract philosophers, in which the state is the result of a transfer of power or a cession of rights, Spinoza’s system makes it possible to regard the passage from individual potentiae to state potestas as the culmination of a constitutive process. The state is no longer conceived as a mediation of interests. Rather, its genesis
opens up as a phenomenology of desires and passions. From an ethical vision of the world, constitution can be seen as an ongoing process in which the passage from the individual to the collective does not generate a transcendental instance of the collective that rules over the individuals. This process is an expansive articulation of affects and adequate ideas in which individuality is “an element of the structure of being that continually spreads toward and across sociability” (Negri, Savage Anomaly 152). The responsibility for the constitutive process begins and ends at the base of society, in the production of compositions that are both inter- and intraindividual. The foundation of the art of organization of the social field in Spinoza is a form of ethical freedom, “a continual process of composition and decomposition through social encounters on an immanent field of forces” (Hardt, Deleuze 121). How, then, under conditions of permanent fluctuation, is it possible to conceive liberation? Because the answer to this question can only be formulated from a geometry of affects, the return to Spinoza provides powerful tools for an antipedagogical conception of emancipation. Liberation is the process by which individuals escape the random fluctuation between joy and sadness by organizing their capacity to act.

This is, therefore, radically different from the liberal and neoliberal concept of freedom. It is the passage from the world of servitude, a world of imperfection, toward a greater perfection based in the expansion of potentia and the overcoming of sadness in a constitutive process of organization. Liberation is immanent, efficient; it does not entail finality. It is “the continual conquest and construction of being. No utopia, no idealistic driving force. Only when it is connected, simultaneous to the body, does the mind think” (Negri, Savage Anomaly 180). The constitutive process consists in combinations and self-formations, a dynamics that unfolds “outside of any formalism, in terms that are instead axiomatic and phenomenological” (213).

Seeing potentia as constitutive power helps to defetishize the forms of the One that hamper the multiple existence of the many as many. For it to be a perspective on the many as many, the multitude needs to refer to a horizon of pure presentation without representation. Multiplicity appears as a given, a fact, a datum of reality that needs no celebration. The multitude, in this sense, is of political interest because it is descriptive of multiplicity. Any elimination of the actual horizon of potentia reintroduces pedagogical
forms. The multitude, then, cannot be another way of making reference to what the sociological jargon defines as social movements. It is neither individual movements nor all the movements taken as a whole. It is, rather, another name for the real movement.

Popular uprisings (such as the puebladas that took place in the last decade and a half in Caracas, Chiapas, Argentina, Bolivia, and Ecuador) are moments in which the constitutive potentia of the multitude acquires visibility. Potentia is present far beyond street protests. It is unleashed in the creation of new modes of interpretation, practices, relations, and meanings. The counter-insurrectional action from the side of power (potestas) consists in operations specifically targeted to undermine the singularity of each part, to make it a normal part of the One. In Argentina, for instance, where the autonomy of a renovated protagonism of the masses reached unprecedented proportions, the manipulation of collective fears in the 2003 national elections, in particular the fear of the return of the dictatorship of the free market, had the practical effect of rebuilding the consistency of the centre, bringing back politics to the safe confines of representation. The winning candidate invested enormous efforts to portray himself as representative of the generation of revolutionaries of the 1970s, of justice in dealing with those responsible for human rights violations during the past dictatorship, and of the demands raised in the streets during and after the crisis of 2001.

The most effective form of counterrevolution occurs, to use again Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts, when molar reactionary investments replace molecular revolutionary investments. The reconstruction of sovereignty formats the multiple becomings of the multitude. Instead of decreeing the end of the state, the multitude removes the latter from the centre to focus on specific practices and relations that produce and defend the concrete bonds that expand potentia.

The multitude is not a subject but both the condition of possibility and the result of any subjectification, the magma, invisible to the representational gaze, from which any subject is made. What defines a subject as such is a capacity to depose a given order of bodies, ways of saying, and doing that structure the many as One. Such a capacity appears closed from the perspective that identifies, classifies, and reifies the established formatting of the social field. The many exist as many in the de-institution of old relations and the institution of new ones based on different values. This happens only when a
different type of bond defines the social: immanent relations of composition knitted at the grassroots.

Even though it may appear obvious, the many cannot constitute one single point of view, but many. There is not a perspective of the multitude. The many can never be grasped globally if we want to grasp them as many. Of the many, we know only what we can know in our situation, which is itself a totality. The multitude can be known through its expressive manifestation in the situation. But the multitude should not be regarded as a “federation of situations” because situations are modes of existence, each of which is multiple and diverse and contains the multitude as a whole.

The multitude does not abolish the One but rather puts the One in the perspective of the many. The Zapatistas have made operational the determination of the One of representation by the many in the slogan mandar obedeciendo (command by obeying). Horizontal relations and autonomy are claims of equality that are confirmed in actu, as opposed to the represented equality of the One of socialist utopias, an imaginary point in the future that crowns the paradigmatic figures of justice that think on behalf of the rest.

**The Political Economy of Global Symmetry: Pedagogicizing the Multitude**

The *potentia* of the multitude is its multiplicity. Because the multitude is a way of counting the many as many, by definition it cannot be One. The only thing that is universal about the multitude is the becoming of *potentiae* in each situation, but never of all the situations considered from a perspective that would give them unity, as if there were only One situation. From a practical standpoint, the multitude only functions as a descriptive category. It provides a cognitive map, in Jameson’s sense. Beyond the description of the multiple and the many it provides, the multitude is of no political interest. It merely functions as an imaginary of completeness that helps each singular point think of its relation to other singularities, that is, other points of subtraction from normality, consensus, and common sense.

The phenomenon that the multitude describes—the presentation of the multiplicity of the many as many prior to any constitution or representation—does not turn into a subject beyond each situation, beyond each singular point in which *potentia* is effected, expanded, or diminished. The many do not have one politics as many, unless they act as
people, class, race, ethnicity, gender, or caste, all categories that bring into existence the pedagogical figures of the wise men or women capable of unveiling their true destiny as preconceived subjects, the realization of their essence, and their encounter with hidden interests.

A fundamental political quality is lost, therefore, when the multitude, as the multiple human terrain in which organization can proceed from singular flows of passions and actions, is supplemented with a labour theory of the subject. The multitude acquires a centre. Multiplicity is subsumed under the logical speculation about interests inferred from the mode of production as described by political economy. The inscription of the multitude within an economic problematic turns it into One, defines pedagogical hierarchies of some points over others, and turns the remainder into an object of sociological knowledge. The political depletion that originates in the global or economic reading prominently appears in Negri and Hardt's conception the multitude.

The collaboration between Hardt and Negri has been a formidable effort to think politics precisely at the moment when so many promising radical conceptions have fallen in the sterile game of consensus. The critiques of orthodox Marxism by Hardt, Negri, and other writers in the tradition known as autonomist Marxism, operaismo (from operaio, worker in Italian), or workerism, have forced important figures of the traditional left to take positions on issues they considered resolved once and for all, most of the time finding themselves unable to answer the charge that for a long time they have done more to reinforce capitalism than to help overcoming it. Some critics have considered the turbulence caused by Empire the first genuine worldwide debate on politics in the revolutionary left in a very long time. The work of Hardt and Negri is offensive; it seeks to recuperate the initiative in the debate with the apologists of the status quo, and it has been successful in doing this. Few other contemporary works rival it in the courage to think beyond political impotence, taking wagers academics cannot usually afford. Empire has other merits that would be impossible to discuss here. The critiques in the pages that follow are not, in any way, intended to dismiss the significance of this work.

Hardt and Negri arrive at the category of the multitude following the thread of Italian operaismo. By practicing what Harry Cleaver calls an “Inversion of Class Perspective” in the reading of Marxian political economy, operaismo subordinated
capitalist development to working class struggles. Against the view that regards capital as the site of domination and the working class as only capable of reactive movements, 

*operaismo* proposes a Copernican inversion: the working class as the dynamic motor of capital and capital as a function of the working class. As Tronti put it, the working class sets the pace while capital follows behind tuning its mechanisms of reproduction (1). Working class struggles are the driving force of capital because they force technological and political innovation (Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically*; Dyer-Witheford).

The inversion of class perspective is a political-economic reading that places the accent on *political* (understood as a subversive dimension manifest in struggles and that exists also as potential subjective capacities) at the moment of *interpreting* the work of Marx. The political *reading* extracts categories that stand the objectivist reading of classical Marxist political economy on its head by fleshing out the subjective impetus to which capital is a response. Thus, *operaismo* speaks, for instance, of a “self-valorization” mirrored by capitalist valorization, “accumulation” and “circulation” of struggles paralleled by the accumulation and circulation of capital, and the “composition” of the class to which a certain organic composition of capital corresponds. *Operaismo* conceives history as a succession of class compositions that capital, in its counterattack, seeks to decompose, and to which the working class responds with a re-composition, adopting in the process a new dynamic of struggle. In every new cycle the working class appears equipped with new skills, forms of organization, and ideologies that resulted from the sedimentation of new technologies, forms of organization of production, and labour discipline. As a result, the working class becomes increasingly autonomous from capital.

The action and reaction movement is expansive in that every cycle sets the two poles further apart, without producing a synthesis, as in the Hegelian dialectic. The irreversibility of the process is what stabilizes the degree of *potentia* reached by the working class every time a new paradigm opens. As Negri insisted in an interview with Colectivo Situaciones, to reach irreversibility is to enter “another paradigm.” What happens next is “a passage from counterpower to *potentia* (potencia) and not from *potentia* to counterpower” (“Entrevista a Toni Negri” 127). Despite the increasing autonomy of the two spheres, they continue to be configured as the symmetrical opposite of each other. Capital appears as an external other and not as a relation that pierces
through the entire society, including the working class. Critics such as John Holloway and Werner Bonefeld have pointed out the failure of operaismo to recognize that, even at the peak of its struggles, the working class is not outside, but rather inside and against capital (Change the World 155-75). We are capital; it exists here and now, in the types of relations we live by. We are responsible for it and for going beyond it.

The cycles studied by autonomists include the professional worker that capital seeks to de-skill with Taylorism, the mass worker of the time of Fordism and Keynesianism, and the social worker, the subject that corresponds to the diffusion of the factory across society. We are now living in the era when the factory has become global. The system that industrialized countries left behind was an arrangement of capital sustained by an industrial proletariat that resisted the Tayloristic control of the shop floor, the Fordist deals of higher wages in exchange for productivity, and the Keynesian organization of reproduction that turned the entire society into a factory. In the period that lasted from the late 1960s to the 1980s, those conditions collapsed under the pressure of struggles. The industrial proletariat confined within the nation-state no longer appears as a force capital has to reckon with. The new labour subjectivity, predominant throughout the shifting landscapes of global capitalism, raises questions about the old division between manual and intellectual labour.

Hardt and Negri introduce Empire as the decentred and deterritorializing form of global sovereignty adopted by postmodern capitalism. Empire is a response to the eccentric configuration and deterritorializing potentiae that the multitude accumulated in its struggles against the modern machines of power of national identity and state sovereignty. The multitude constitutes an eccentric subject whose multiple micro-resistances Empire opposes. The response from Empire is symmetrical in that it is forced to ease the boundaries of nation-states, functioning everywhere as a central power. As a result of the confrontation between the increasingly autonomous multitude and Empire, the earlier division between rich and poor countries is being replaced by smooth flows of capital and labour between new segmentations. The fortresses of those included coexist side by side with the no men's lands of the excluded.

The antagonism of the multitude deterritorializes and de-centres. It tends to reject localisms, while, at the same time, defines trajectories of migratory exodus from the most
impoverished areas that destroy boundaries and reappropriate spaces. By pushing the boundaries of Empire, the multitude removes the nostalgia for earlier power structures, offering an alternative to place-based left-wing nationalisms.

Hardt and Negri argue that because of the abstract social activity that is pumped into the production and reproduction of social relations, the “raw material” of immaterial labour, the place of exploitation is indeterminate. The authors point out that the postmodern object of exploitation is abstract social activity and universal productive capacity, including “the cooperating set of brains and hands, minds and bodies; ... the desire and the striving of the multitude of mobile and flexible workers; ... its intellectual energy and linguistic and communicative construction of the multitude of intellectual and affective laborers” (Empire 209). Productive forces are exploited “in the non-place of world production where labor is exploited” (210). The removal of exploitation from particular spatial coordinates has developed from two directions. The factory ceased to be the locus of production of surplus value the moment capital began to include the reproduction of labour capacity as part of the calculation of production. This includes the labour of care that feeds and contains labour power affectively, raises new labour power, and educates it to make it productive. The patriarchal family, the school, the healthcare system were sites making decisive contributions to the productivity of the factory. The circuit of production of value is now located in a diffuse social factory at a global scale. Social relations, culture, and communication have become resources that are constantly mined in the search for new commodities or new ways of selling old ones. Production has become biopolitical in the sense that forms of life and subjectivity are productive and political economy now recognizes value as “an investment of desire” (Negri, “Value and Affect” 87).

Hardt and Negri argue that any local project to resist Empire, such as the nation-state, is nonviable because it reintroduces transcendent sovereignty and presupposes the bounded notion of the people, which is at odds with global flows of capital and supranational forms of sovereignty. The multitude is the unbound multiplicity that helps us imagine an alternative “in every place” (Empire 211). The alternative is antagonistic in the same global dimension where the world market and delocalized exploitation exist:
Empire can be effectively contested *only on its own level of generality* and by pushing the processes that it offers past their present limitations. We have to accept that challenge and learn to *think globally and act globally*. Globalization must be met with a counter-globalization, Empire with a counter-Empire" (206-7, my emphasis).

The hypothesis of the multitude as a subject that never leaves the terrain of concrete resistances, antagonizes from every place, and, at the same time, holds on to a *global* response, raises several questions. Can the global conception of the multitude Hardt and Negri arrive at by following the trail of the reversed political economy of the theory of class composition be a valid description of resistances that occur at from singular points? How can the forces that confront global capitalism act at its same level of abstraction while, at the same time, remaining absolutely immanent and actual, acting as singularities in (and only in) the different situations that resist capitalism and building new, non-capitalist collective bonds? To abandon the situation—by thinking and acting globally—does not seem a viable alternative to consolidate the resistances and new relations created by people whose experience of marginality and destitution is immediate and concrete.

The inversion of the class perspective is still trapped in the virtualizing effects of political-economic discourse. As Miguel Benasayag argues, political economy “is its virtuality” ("Meta-economia" 48). From the Right to the Left, the economic gaze earns its legitimacy because of “the ‘impalpable’ quality of the economic matter” that “gives it its ‘scientific’ character” (49). Economic imperatives are inevitably abstract, deterritorialized in the purest sense of the term as they function within the regime of the laws of large numbers and statistical aggregates (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 287). Can the multitude, when seen as the global antagonist of Empire, avoid the deterritorializing effect that dissolves situations and inevitably posits a separate plane of hierarchies and filters that marginalize local and non-legitimated knowledges of resistance? Consider, for instance, the centrality of immaterial labour vis-à-vis the rather marginal status within the multitude of actual struggles such as the Zapatistas, Brazil’s landless peasants, or the Palestinian Intifada. The inversion practiced by the theory of class composition cannot
eliminate virtuality from its epistemology because it still thinks in terms of the world as a single situation.

Thus, the most immediate political problem posed by thinking globally is that any form of acting, both locally and globally, if it intends to be liberating, can hardly start from ideas and experiences that are not situated and concrete. By thinking globally one enters a regime of ideas that are too general, ideas whose universality ceases to augment potentia precisely where it takes place—in the here of concrete situations—and when it is unleashed—in the now of action. As Spinoza argued, the most universal and general notions are also the most inadequate for practice because they do not express relations in which every body agrees with others directly and from its own point of view. These ideas only express general agreements. In the case of those ideas that are universal and abstract, our relation to them results in the weakening of our power to act (Deleuze, Expressionism 230-1). A decisive step toward practice comes when we can form notions that envelop and explain our power to think and act. Once we are able to form these adequate ideas with a few other bodies that we affect and are affected by, we can form common notions. For Spinoza, these notions refer not just to the establishment of commonality of thought with others but, most importantly, to the search for possibilities of composition that spring up from the immanence of encounters and go on to help us be reunited with our power (potentia) to act. The formation of common notions indicates the moment when we begin to be in full possession of our power to act: when we become active.

Politics is inherently asymmetrical. It is, as Rancière points out, “the art of the local and singular construction of cases of universality” (Disagreement 139). There is politics when, at a local level, a concrete case is made for the universality of freedom and justice. There is no freedom or equality beyond that, for the terrain of social aggregations is also, necessarily, the terrain of police. “There is a world police,” Rancière points out, “but there is no world politics” (139). Globalization expands our perception of “the world,” but this has no effect in the universality of politics, which continues to consist in the singular production of a distortion by a local exercise of potentia.

The problem of trying to confront imperial globalization symmetrically, at the same level of generality, is the presupposition that politics can exist outside situations that are never a general viewpoint; never One, always multiple. For instance the slogan
“another world is possible,” raised by the organizers of the World Social Forums, still presupposes a spectacular unification, a turning into One through representation of something that exists as a diffuse presentation (Debord 29). As the Malgré Tout collective suggests, to conceive the world as a reality “out there” in which it is possible to intervene entails an uncritical assumption of the determinations of the spectacle that define us as individuals-spectators. Having the world as a horizon of practice “reduces any political action to impotence because it pulls [our actions] out from a concrete situation” (62). Militant interventions based in global views immobilize us for action inside our own situation, which is wherefrom potentia draws its force and has material effects. Those interventions usually start from a messianic blueprint of how the world ought to look like, rather than from praxis built on the careful and patient composition knitted in the world here and now, subtracted from the spectacle.

In this sense, anti-capitalist actions intended as global interventions only succeed in separating themselves from their capacity to resist, for they do not advance freedom as immanent and permanent struggle in the situation by opposing an abstract idea of imperial globalization. It was in their quest for non-spectacular forms of confronting the spectacle that the situationists suggested that, from the point of view of an active and desiring subjectivity, there should only be an interest in the practice of situations, the concrete realms of construction of life and affirmation of joy (Situationist International, “Questionnaire”). The point is not just to acknowledge that existence is situated in the world, as twentieth-century phenomenologists did. Recognizing our situated being has to be the first step toward a political phenomenology of situations.

The situationist perspective on the situation was inspired by Jean-Paul Sartre, for whom there is no freedom outside acts of resistance produced as particularities vis-à-vis the generality of the world: “there is freedom only in a situation, and there is a situation only through freedom. ... There can be a free for-itself only as engaged in a resisting world. Outside of this engagement the notions of freedom, of determination, of necessity lose all meaning” (Sartre qtd. in Plant 20-21). The situationists sought to incarnate freedom as resistance through a radical critique of the spectacle. For instance, a legitimate tactic of subversion, such as the détournement, could expose, in situation, the mechanisms that subsume meanings and desires to commodity relations, alienating experiences, and
emotions. The situationists were aware that a truly materialist critique, one that can emancipate society from the abstract transcendence of the spectacle, should be an immanent critique. Perhaps the greatest weakness of the situationists was to build a critical edifice on the possibility of the final victory of consciousness over desire. In this sense, one could risk the argument that the situationist project was trapped in a pedagogy of consciousness. But any such critique must strongly emphasize the ambivalence of its pedagogical status. The situationists were well aware of the constitutive force of affects and of the impossibility of a spectacular critique of the spectacle.

Unlike the situationists—and the different Marxisms that seek better tactics to expose to consciousness the truth of capitalist injustice—Spinoza regarded desire as always positive, always an affirmation of the intensity of potentia. Even when we desire to be enslaved we act affirmatively, because what matters from the point of view of freedom is how our power to be affected limits our power to act. A desire for servitude is the reduction of potentia as power to act to its lowest point.

For Spinoza, like for Debord, the isolated individual exposed to a world of abstractions is a figure of weakness. Weakness begins to wane as potentia expands. This can only happen in the immanent terrain of concrete experience, in the direction of encounters with other bodies with which we form compositions. The path toward potentia is a succession of relations of composition that starts at—and never abandons—the experiential dimension of the encounters.

The idea of political change implicit in the symmetrical confrontation between Empire and the multitude is the possibility of a new constitution, a new configuration of constituted power that will mark the arrival of communist society once capitalist relations of production and forms of sociability are overcome. Change is to enter a new paradigm—economic, social, technical, and cultural—that results from irreversible accumulations of potentia. In contrast, a subtractive concept of politics understands communism as a manifestation of potentia, that is, as the asymmetrical opposite of power (potestas) that exists in both the resistance to capitalism and the creation of new forms of sociability. In this sense, communism is not a society to be arrived at but “the emergence, here and now, of multiple forms of existence” (Colectivo Situaciones in Negri, “Entrevista a Toni Negri” 127). For the multitude to be a political category, each of its
multiple forms of existence has to define a line of escape of its own, which, to unleash forms of deterritorialization, has to be able to disturb the tranquility of values and certainties, abandoning in the process the vision of a unified world of antagonism.\textsuperscript{78}

\textbf{Immanent Pedagogy: the Centrality of Immaterial Labour}

A conception of the multitude in the global terms of the inverted economic reading inevitably leads to the terrain of production when it comes to finding the forces that can contest and overthrow Empire. It is in the creative power of the multitude, which Hardt and Negri identify with the capacities of living labour, where the forces lay that both constitute Empire and anticipate its decline and fall. In a line of argument consistent with Italian \textit{operaismo}, Hardt and Negri seek to identify the potential for insurrection of the multitude through an inquiry into productive living labour. In this sense, the multitude is a class concept that defines a reality that does not coincide with the working class because it includes forms of labour that have not been previously accounted for. \textit{Working class}, according to the authors, is an inadequate concept to define the original force that animates social production in contemporary capitalism. At the same time, the category of the multitude seeks to become a critique of the tendency—implicit in the traditional Marxist use of the concept of class—to unidimensionalize the multiplicity of value-producing subjects into a homogeneous mass, making them lose their singularity and potential for autonomous organization.\textsuperscript{79}

The traditional readings of the work of Marx, for which labour—particularly industrial, manual, factory labour—is the social space where to find the subject that can act against capital, are no longer in tune with history. Such readings are unable to account for the transformations in the labour process in the last decades. This transformation involves a loss of importance, both quantitative and qualitative, of factory work when production is defined as post-Fordist, information-dependent, and linked to flexible patterns of accumulation.\textsuperscript{80} The new era is accompanied by the rise of a new hegemonic figure of labour that influences all the others, much like factory labour influenced the transformation of all spheres of society, from commerce and agriculture to education and the configuration of the nuclear family. The new hegemonic figure is immaterial labour (Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labor” 133). Immaterial, indeed, refers to the product, not to the activity itself. As action, labour is always material. The stuff processed by immaterial
labour is language. It produces, manages, and distributes ideas and symbols. Immaterial labour also works upon affects, emotions, and feelings. It produces and handles a whole range of affective activities involving care, education, entertainment, and public relations. Immaterial labour has colonized all sectors of production. Its form of organization—the distributed network—has become hegemonic in the sense that it has been adopted across society. It includes all the activities directly involved in the production and reproduction of life. Because it directly concerns life and because it contains in potential form the capacities to act against capital, immaterial labour is biopolitical.

Hardt and Negri focus on immaterial labour as the subject that has the power to actualize the virtual capacities of the multitude. This hierarchy within the multitude defines a sort of centrality without a centre. There is a portion of the eccentric multitude whose activity is crucial in the formation of a counter-Empire. Not only is it “impossible to imagine Empire without immaterial productivity at its center,” but also the political qualities of the multitude seem inconceivable without this central figure because “the active subjects in the construction and hence too the destruction of this system of power are rather all the collective figures that are born of the socialization and intellectualization of labour” (Hardt and Negri, “Adventures of the Multitude” 240). The multitude with immaterial labour at its centre is the point of departure for the composition of the force that would allow the passage beyond Empire.

The definition of a hegemonic figure diminishes the centrifugal force of the multitude because liberation presupposes the affinities formed in the new forms of value production. On one hand, immaterial labour is central to the formation of an antagonistic subject because of the position it occupies “in both the schema of capitalist production and the composition of the proletariat” (Hardt and Negri, Empire 53). On the other hand, immaterial labour is central because it configures the terrain of confrontation against Empire through the capacities it brings into play. It condenses the virtual capacities of the multitude, that is, the elements of its configuration the multitude can count on in order to become a political subject. The subjectivities that produce “postmodern capitalism” contain, as virtualities, a series of powers to act such as knowledge, affect, science and language that, by becoming actual, can be diverted against Empire (357-8). As Hardt
points out, immaterial labour has a “potential for subversion and autonomous constitution” (Hardt, “Affective Labour” 90).

In a very important sense, the inverted reading of Marx’s political economy remains traditional. It continues to invoke the sociology of the labour process in order to resolve the question of the subject. The inquiry into the qualities of the hegemonic productive subjectivities within the multitude presupposes the subject as already constituted. The economic outlook applies a one-dimensional filter on the multiple causality of reasons why people struggle for freedom and justice. The complexity of politics is delegated, as Colectivo Situaciones suggests, “to a dream of messianic salvation that yearns for the coming of the worker-subject” (Mezzadra and Colectivo Situaciones 35).

The theory of class composition expects the subject to emerge from the working class, which, like in the traditional Marxist reading of economy, contains, at least potentially, communist and anticapitalist elements. In the traditional eschatology the working class is separated from its interests by its undeveloped consciousness, introducing the need of the pedagogical figure of the Party. In contrast, for operaismo workers, whether they are conscious of it or not, always incarnate their true interests. Workers’ interests are already manifest in their actions, in what the working class does. Working class activity is the sole expression of working class interests and the entire spectrum of activity of the working class is indicative of its potentia. Operaismo remains close to the mainstream, non-inverted interpretation of Marx’s political economy because it understands that the working class is the subject—all the time, everywhere. The activity of living labour always already implies a political challenge to capital. Granted, historical necessity and dialectical synthesis have been eliminated in the theory of class composition. There is no longer a basis for the enlightened intervention of an external pedagogue, such as the Party or progressive intellectuals. But, the significant advance implicit in the recognition that resistance comes first and that politics is not separated from social struggle, is set back when there is not a clear way to distinguish between types of action such as, for instance, the subjective traits developed in the labour process of immaterial production and the insurrectional activity of, say, the Zapatistas.
The centrality of immaterial labour implicitly suggests that not all the members of the multitude are subjects in the same degree. Some are intrinsically better positioned than others because they are the ones who have gone the furthest in pushing forward the reaction of capitalism, forcing it into new paradigms of production by achieving new levels of empowerment and autonomy. Each composition needs a hegemonic figure, from the professional worker, to the mass worker, to the socialized worker, to immaterial labour engaged in biopolitical production. The elimination of the problem of consciousness sweeps away the Party as a pedagogical figure external to the working class. But pedagogy reappears as an implicit function of the hegemonic figure. As Sandro Mezzadra points out, the centrality of immaterial labour repositions "the function of the party inside the class composition" (Mezzadra and Colectivo Situaciones 37). The Party reappears as a function inherent in immaterial labour. Pedagogy becomes immanent.

The Party-function of immaterial labour as immanent pedagogue appears more transparently in Franco Berardi, another important theorist of contemporary operaismo. Berardi argues that the increase of the mass of intellectual labour and its proletarianization over the last decades compels us to think politics in radically different terms. In the first decades of the twentieth century the Party was seen as the only possible space in which intellectuals and workers could come together to bring about the emancipation of the working class. In the Leninist tradition, the need for the Party was justified by the inability of the working class to go beyond merely economic struggles. Left to its own resources, the working class was unable to break through its spontaneous trade-unionist consciousness. Because of their access to education and knowledge, revolutionary intellectuals coming from the propertied classes could help the working class elaborate the revolutionary consciousness that is necessary to conquer state power. Leninism maintains a hierarchy of knowers (those working on the side of scientific socialism) and not-knowers (the proletariat that could only develop a trade-unionist consciousness). For Berardi, the conditions that made this hierarchy possible have disappeared because the second term has been eliminated by the current conditions of capitalist accumulation. The Leninist party, Berardi argues, is structurally incompatible with the Internet-based economy.
According to Berardi, the significant increase of the cognitive component of labour has brought into existence a mass intellectuality. Under these conditions, intellectuals are no longer external figures who can dig out the interests of the proletariat or who need a Party to inculcate a consciousness the workers lack. Rather, intellectuals have become the working class. The “cognitariat” is the successor of the proletariat. The Party undertook the pedagogic mission of educating workers so that they could do away with false consciousness. Instead of forming a vanguard that represents and instructs from outside, cognitive workers are faced with the challenge of self-organization. Berardi understands that the tasks that open before the cognitariat are not pedagogical in the Leninist sense. They construct the path to emancipation by taking advantage of their place in the composition and by “recombining” knowledge to create new, non-capitalist assemblages. To do this, Berardi argues, the cognitariat has at its disposition extraordinary intellectual and communication resources that professional and mass workers lacked.

By glossing over the characteristics of the educational system, Berardi escapes the pedagogy of consciousness to endorse the myth of classical enlightenment pedagogy that education emancipates. It appears that only now that their passage through university classrooms has placed workers at the same intellectual level as the intellectuals that used to rule them from the Party are they ready to rule themselves democratically. Although the schools and universities that train the cognitariat are far more integrated to production than ever before, they appear within this theory as having a distinctively emancipatory role because they mass-produce new generations of cognitive workers who can “recombine” their instrumental knowledge capacities subversively into counter-compositions and anti-capitalist assemblages of knowledge and affect. This reconversion, Berardi argues, is possible because of the significant subjective involvement the labour process demands. The struggles of the cognitariat do not need mediations to become directly political and so the passage toward a post-capitalist order does not need an external intervention. While the Party unidimensionalizes struggles, organizing them in a dualistic confrontation with the capitalist state, cognitive workers combine in compositions that enhance the multiplicity of each struggle. Composition is the concept that Berardi, in dialogue with Foucault’s distinction between universal and specific
intellectuals, uses to present a post-universal intellectual that has been removed from the hierarchical implications of a relation that is organized pedagogically. Recombination is "a function of subjectivity" that helps us to think new assemblages of knowledge created across different "domains of social production" that "do not depend on profit but rather on social utility." By activating this function, struggles can create new "techno-linguistic interfaces" outside "profit and the accumulation of value" (Berardi 136). Simultaneously workers and intellectuals, "cognitarians" no longer conceive knowledge separated from social practices because of the specific characteristics of social production in our time.

The immanent character of this pedagogy should not be overestimated. It is not clear how immaterial labour can overcome its separation from the components of the multitude in relation to which it is hegemonic. This separation is defined not only by the fact that those who have access to scientific and technical knowledge occupy a position of privilege with respect to, for instance, the indigenous communities of Chiapas, the unemployed who live in the slums of Buenos Aires, Brazilian landless peasants, and Bolivian miners. Nor is the separation only a matter of geographical distance. It is inherent in the relation the "cognitive worker" has with knowledge. It is the separation that, by absolutizing the brain as the organ of thought, removes the body from the scene. The belief that thought is exclusively an activity of the mind leads to an inevitable hierarchy: the engineer’s thought is superior to that of the foreman, whose thought is more reliable than that of the machine operator, who, in turn, is more capable of thought than the cleaning lady.

We are back in the terrain that Joseph Jacotot sought to avoid in his lessons on intellectual emancipation. He was aware that it is impossible to emancipate from a position that legitimates the hierarchies of intelligence, since "the superior mind condemns itself to never being understood by inferiors." Those in a position of superiority assure their "intelligence by disqualifying those who could show him their recognition of it" (Rancière, Ignorant Schoolmaster 40). An emancipator working under the principle of equality does not need to have a special knowledge. She only needs to reveal to other people that their intelligences are equal to everyone else’s, to help them abandon the stultifying belief that intelligences are different. It is not an easy task, for stultification involves both those who are sure about their inferiority and those who remain convinced
of their intellectual superiority. An infinite chain of inferiorities and superiorities supports the principle of intellectual inequality.

Within the terrain of economic causality, the question regarding the subject is not an open question, but one whose parameters are already determined. The question is asked only in part, because much of the answer is known. It is known where the subject is and that it is there all the time. Hence the need to open the question about the subject, to recognize that it occupies a position of genuine ignorance. In politics, a subject is an agent capable of undoing regions, identities, and functions; a singular force that irrupts inventing a new space-time. Subject is a generic place that can be occupied by anyone willing to raise a dispute that cannot find solution from the point of view of the common sense of the situation. Politics lasts while the dispute is underway. “Politics, in its specificity, is rare. It is always local and occasional” (Rancière, Disagreement 139). The subject is evanescent. If it is to last, it needs to avoid the temptation to accept inclusion. The subject is “unpredictable … displaced vis-à-vis all the possibilities that a situation proposes” (Malgré Tout 68). The only feature that defines a subject is its position as a minority, understood not in numerical but in qualitative terms. A minority defined not as an identity, but as “a becoming, a process” (Deleuze, “Control and Becoming” 104-6). The subject can aspire to become a majority in order to secure and administer what it has been able to create, but at that moment it ceases to be a subject. Thus, against the ultraleftist, or perhaps anarchist, thesis that valorizes only the “subject” moment, this notion of the subject valorizes also the moment of defense and administration of what has been achieved, on the condition that this second moment is not confused with politics. The potential of a subject depends on its ability to sustain its becomings by remaining multiple, unidentifiable. Such is the case, for example, of the constantly changing configuration of the Zapatistas, always escaping the definitions the Mexican state, the media, and the left continuously put on them. Subjectivation follows different paths, some of which have to do with the subjectivity developed in production, but many others have not. The richness of the category of the multitude—prior to its political-economic inscription—is precisely the recognition of the diversity of journeys in the formation of political subjects, each of which is the multitude acting as a minority in a situation.
At this point it is, perhaps, opportune to digress for a moment about another sense in which multitude is a descriptive category. When Marx, in *Grundrisse*, reflects upon the method of political economy, he discusses the problems involved in considering population as a descriptive category. The method of the political economists begins with what appears to be real and concrete, such as the population of a nation. When considering classes and the determinations on which they rest, political economists overcome the chaos revealed when the concept of population is opened up by building economic systems based on conceptual abstractions such as labour, value, and money. In contrast, the scientific journey, or, let’s say, the journey of the materialist thinker, should go from the imagined concrete to the simplest determinations and, from there, it should go back to the initial whole, but now grasped in the richness of its determinations and relations. It starts from the concrete and arrives at the concrete. By following this path, Marx argues, the materialist analyst arrives “at the population again, but this time not as the chaotic conception of the whole, but as a totality of many determinations and relations” (100). A materialist description is always aware that it is an imaginary ordering of real chaos. It is not the description of an object by a subject in which concepts acquire a life of their own. Even when its categories are able to grasp concrete elements, the materialist viewpoint acknowledges that it is an abstraction of the real. I am arguing that the multitude is a descriptive category in this sense: an abstract name for a multiplicity of subjective becomings, the description of a state of fusion that appears when the One ceases to be and multiplicity has not yet become the count of multiple ones.

The multitude can be a good descriptive category on the condition that it does not have a pedagogical core. To think of the multitude as multiple situated counterpowers, as singularities constituted in subtraction, that is, without any of them occupying the centre—neither the most advanced sector of productive labour nor the most backward one—is not a move in the direction of abandoning the centrality of the labour problematic in capitalism. What needs to be removed from the centre is the labour situation. Labour is a central category in capitalism, not as particular labours or even as value-producing activity in general, but as a determination that allows us, for instance, to understand the resistances of people to being thrown to the always-growing mass that capital reduces to mere labour power.
Benasayag and Sztulwark suggest that it is in this sense that work tends to express itself in every situation, albeit always in a distinct and particular form (129-33). Thus, the workers' situation and the problem of labour are two separate concepts. The former refers to the specific forms of the labour process, the contexts of work, labour relations, unemployment, precariousness, or the living conditions of those unable to work. Many of the studies on Fordism, post-Fordism, and immaterial labour provide some of the most insightful descriptions of labour situations. Labour as a problem, on the other hand, is a concept that refers more widely to the tendency of work to appear as a central question in all the situations where capitalist relations are hegemonic.

The omnipresence of the labour problem in capitalism is inconceivable for a postmodern view of contemporary society as a series of loose fragments, in which labour appears as just another fragment with no particular relevance in politics. In this case, what happens is the substitution of labour as a problem for the labour situation: if the situation is not a context of work, the labour problem does not appear. In this way, postmodernism has avoided reflecting upon capitalist hegemony and the anticapitalist basis of the struggles in those situations in which the labour question expresses itself but are not explicitly work contexts. The neoliberal managerial ethos has gone even further, taking measures (even if symbolic ones) to make even the labour situation disappear from view. Thus, people who work are often given names that disguise the fact of exploitation, from Wal-Mart associates, to cultural entrepreneurs, to content providers.

In capitalism, the labour question is central because it is the catalyst that brings many political disputes into being by subordinating situations to capitalist social relations. The commodification of every realm of existence in late capitalist societies makes wage labour the norm that defines the conditions of survival and continuity of life. Labour weighs on the shoulders of Argentina's piqueteros, Silicon Valley computer programmers, Canadian farmers, and Mexican maquiladora workers. It defines the meaning, time, and contexts of living of nurses, university students, retirees, teachers, and housewives. Work is inextricably tied to consumption and thus to the production of desires and images of happiness in capitalism.

In each of these situations the struggles defined by the labour question take a specific form: from students who question the instrumentalization of education, to
unemployed workers who create community vegetable gardens to reduce the need for
money, to workers who occupy factories when their bosses decide to close them in order
to move their capital to invest in a sweatshop in Central America, to consumers who resist
outsourcing to plants in China by buying locally produced goods. Labour as a problematic
defines the conditions of exploitation even for those whose labour power has not been
subsumed, from the unemployed to small business owners struggling to survive in
competition with big corporations, to houseworking women seeking financial
independence. The adequacy of the forms of organization to confront the labour problem
cannot be decided in advance, inverting the global perspective that capitalism has. While
wage labour as a problematic is ubiquitous throughout capitalism, the ways in which this
problem manifests itself are heterogeneous. Each situation demands specific forms of
fighting back and thinking beyond the problem.

However, there are many struggles whose consistency is not structured by the
labour problematic. Capitalism is, indeed, a fundamental force “in the current
conjuncture, extending its influence to a series, an almost universal ensemble of
situations, even if in many situations it exists as a minor element, or as an element that
can only be evoked by means of other elements” (Benasayag and Sztulwark 212). Let’s
take the example of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, the group of Argentinean women
whose children were kidnapped, tortured, and disappeared by military and police death
squad because of their involvement in revolutionary organizations in the 1970s. Madres
has been the most consistent and tenacious resistance against the numerous attempts by
many governments to file the cases and pardon those involved in the genocide. Their
minority position constantly disputed what, at each moment, were the terms of consensus
sought by politicians to establish “peace.” In times when neoliberalism was moving so
swiftly that nobody dared to react, they remained a constant dissenting presence. Or
consider, for instance, the women’s movement, which struggled against the rule of
patriarchy that confined women to housework but also challenged religious and secular
myths that format sex, love, human reproduction, and knowledge. What these struggles
have in common is that they attacked the common sense of the majority, defining a “non
negotiable” standpoint, which continued to displace itself with respect to the norm of the
status quo at different times of their struggle. These struggles, like many others, reveal in
their situation a commitment to justice that is universal. They are concrete but appeal to
everybody.

The Politics of Automation and the Automation of Politics

Perhaps one of the aspects in which Empire has been most successful is in
challenging orthodox Marxist answers to the question “where is politics.” This may be
one of the reasons why the book has been immensely attractive among grassroots activists
and alternative social justice movements around the world with a first-hand experience of
the dead-end of state politics. Hardt and Negri remove politics from political parties,
unions, or any other means for “taking power.” The problem, however, is that, re-located
now in the activity of the multitude, politics loses its specificity.

The question where is politics is inseparable from the question what is politics and
what specifically distinguishes it from non-politics. Politics comes into existence when
there is a dynamic that institutes a difference; a difference that has to be radical. As an
event, politics marks a before and after. Politics is a rupture that undoes the totalizing
order of police, establishes new perceptions, ways of counting, doing, affecting, and
being affected. It is the irruption of multiplicity that happens when the unaccounted for
disrupt and dis-order the bond that defines a society as One. Political discontinuity
requires a subjective decision, a will that intervenes producing a rupture.

Where is politics in Hardt and Negri’s theory of the multitude? Is rupture a
component of the multitude’s political horizon? What drives the multitude beyond
Empire? One of the most daring wagers of this theory of the multitude is that the
historical dynamics of the many as many is not dialectical but ontological: it is
established within the order of being. The ontological substance is the living labour that
constitutes the world. Hardt and Negri’s multitude drives history forward because it
embraces productive capacity at the moment when production has become biopolitical, a
concept, in their usage, that brings together production and constitution.

This ontological conception of historical development is built upon certain reading
of the concept of conatus, which Spinoza formulates as follows: “Everything, insofar as it
is in itself, endeavours to persist in its own being” (Ethics, III, p. 6). Negri interprets the
conatus as “a permanently active motor, a purely immanent causality that goes beyond
the existent” (Savage Anomaly 146). The conatus of living labour is, for Negri, the way
of understanding history ontologically ("Entrevista" 113). Productive and constitutive striving define the multitude, which explains the vitality with which it perseveres in its being. The motor of the multitude—the way in which the conatus manifests itself—is "an expansive power, a power of freedom, ontological construction, and omnilateral dissemination" (Hardt and Negri, Empire 358). Politics defined ontologically does not depart from the plane of immanence: "Immanence is defined as the absence of every external limit from the trajectories of the action of the multitude, and immanence is tied only, in its affirmations and destructions, to regimes of possibility that constitute its formation and development" (373). Once politics has been defined ontologically, can a rupture be conceived given that everything considered political is positive, productive, immanent, and always on the side of desire?

Rupture, for the global multitude, can mean no less than the fall of Empire. As Raúl Cerdeiras argues, if rupture was not in the horizon, the unfolding of the ontology of the multitude would not constitute a drama ("Desventuras" 34). But, if ontology is only on the side of the multitude, what kind of obstacle is there in Empire that prevents the rupture? First of all, it is necessary to remember that Empire is not completely an obstacle. Empire has two sides. The apparatuses of power that guarantee the functioning of the machine of biopolitical command constitute one side. The other side of Empire coincides with the plural multitude itself, accompanying the creative subjectivities of globalization that continually impose reconfigurations in the system. Today the multitude exists within and against Empire, Hardt and Negri argue. Insofar as the multitude is within Empire, the latter accompanies the ontological unfolding of the multitude. This is the positive aspect of the deterritorializing force of global capital, which, on the one hand, weakens the transcendent forms of nation-states and local identities and, on the other, creates extensive networks that consolidate the nomadic and communicative capacities of the multitude. In this sense, "Empire is good in itself but not for itself" (42). It has a positive side insofar as its plane of immanence coincides with that of the multitude, but it is not good for itself insofar as this is precisely that which will precipitate its end.

This is not the aspect of Empire that the multitude confronts. Rather, as Cerdeiras argues, it is the other, non-ontological side of Empire that the multitude is up against. The domination aspect of Empire is an apparatus that captures the creative power of the
multitude, a form empty of content, a constituted power that is a mere trace of the constituent power of the multitude. This aspect prevents the virtual powers of the multitude from being realized. Without it, nothing would stop the multitude, and, therefore, there would be no need of rupture. The domination aspect of Empire is weak, because it can neither afford to defeat the multitude nor prevent its own erosion. The power of the non-ontological side of Empire is never strong enough to be in real contradiction with the multitude. Action is always on the side of the multitude. Empire (the side that confronts the multitude) is merely reactive; it is sterile, because it cannot replace the productive powers of the multitude, and is, in the end, impotent to stop the multitude.

Is rupture possible under conditions of absolute immanence? Because Hardt and Negri conceive the multitude globally, they cannot think of an outside to its plane of immanence. From this global perspective, there are no longer “weak links” since there is no longer an outside to power. Each local struggle, from its singularity, points directly to the virtual centre of Empire, which can be reached from any point. The immanent terrain of ontology does not allow rupture as a possibility. Politics resides in the generative capacities of the multitude. This is perhaps the highest point of Hardt and Negri’s vitalism. The alternative has to be constructed on the productive and democratic foundations of the desires of the multitude.

In the theory of class composition, rupture consists in a more or less gradual paradigmatic shift. Today, with the formation of the multitude, the cycles of struggle, composition, and de-composition have reached an end. The rise of Empire is itself a moment of rupture that “throws open all the windows of history” (Hardt and Negri, Empire 52). The multitude comes into being as the result of the rupture defined by the entry of capitalism in the phase of general intellect, the moment in history when, as Marx hypothesized in his Grundrisse, “social knowledge has become a direct force of production” and when the power of knowledge takes control of “the conditions of the process of social life itself” (706). General intellect is the last of a succession of ruptures. In each of them the refusal of wage labour by living labour pushed forward technological development and the automation of industry. General intellect is not just the machines, but also the cognitive and affective competences distributed in the masses of producers.
Once capitalism has entered the stage of general intellect, there is no longer rupture but ontological generation and productivity of desire (Hardt and Negri, Empire 387).

The “beyond”—post-capitalist society—can today only be reached by the ontological thrust of the multitude within its plane of immanence. In order for this to happen, the multitude has to make effective its capacities. Hardt and Negri define this process, which is no longer of rupture but of transformation, as the passage from the virtual to the possible and from the possible to the real. By virtual the authors “understand the set of powers to act (being, loving, transforming, creating) that reside in the multitude” (Empire 357). These capacities become real through the action of living labour. This is the process by which the multitude becomes a subject. To become subject, that is, to give an orientation to struggles beyond their spontaneous occurrence is the telos or project of the multitude.

As Cerdeiras suggests, the threshold between the multitude “in itself” and its project can only be crossed by breaking with spontaneous action, otherwise it would not be possible to tell whether there has been a passage from the virtual to the real. The passage beyond spontaneity must be problematic. There has to be an obstacle the multitude has to confront, otherwise there would not be a reason why the multitude is not a multitude for itself all the time, in which case, its virtual capacities would not need to become real (“Desventuras” 33). Hardt and Negri argue that the multitude has the resources to produce “a singularity that establishes a new place in the non-place of Empire, a singularity that is a reality produced by cooperation, represented by the linguistic community, and developed by the movements of hybridization.” And, thus, by “standing the ideology of the market on its feet, the multitude promotes through its labor the biopolitical singularizations of groups and sets of humanity” (Empire 395). The telos of the multitude is its inherently positive desire for liberation.

The multitude in itself needs to become a multitude for itself in order to cause the definitive fall of Empire. The existence of this need, Cerdeiras points out, reveals an insufficiency (“Desventuras” 37). How is the multitude going to supplement this lack without abandoning the plane of immanence? Is there a difference between politics and non-politics, between a militant and a non-militant of the multitude?
While immaterial labour is the immanent pedagogical nucleus of the multitude, it by no means is its vanguard. Politics is an activity carried out by the multitude in its entirety. This is an activity of constitution that Hardt and Negri choose to call posse, a term from Renaissance humanism that the authors interpret as the synthesis of being, knowledge, and constitutive power. Posse is a constituent power that expresses itself in self-valorization, cooperation, and political power. The political ontology of the multitude unfolds as a genetic process, a positive transformation without fractures toward the inevitable formation of a powerful being. It seems that all we need is patience “... and thus ... await only the maturation of the political development of the posse” (Empire 411). In the becoming subject of the multitude there is neither rupture nor novelty or subject. As Cerdeiras points out, if politics is everywhere, it is nowhere (“Desventuras” 43). The best way to ensure the disappearance of politics is to entrust it to ontology. Hardt and Negri propose a militant figure that is no longer a representative of the human needs and interests of others. Anyone in the multitude is in a position to carry out constitutive activity, to produce new social relations. But to say that anyone can do politics is not the same as saying that any action done by anybody is political.

Lenin sought to overcome trade unionism by conceiving a political instance that was not contained by the economic struggles of the workplace. Because the spontaneous resistance of workers had the limited horizon of unionism, Lenin considered the need of an intervention to transform struggles in a political direction. Negri, on the other hand, argues that the planes of economic and political decision (which used to be in the hands of two separate institutions, respectively the union and the Party) have collapsed. Lenin’s dichotomy between trade unionism and politics ends when the factory coincides with society itself, when production occupies the entire space of life. This abolishes the distinction between spontaneity and rupture by abolishing the second term, since, within Empire every resistance in production contributes toward the passage beyond Empire (Negri, “Entrevista” 122).

After the publication of Empire Negri has been more ambiguous regarding whether intervention is necessary to articulate the capacities of the general intellect:

“maybe we need a demiurge to make the event real, that is, an external vanguard, that turns the flesh [of the body without organs] into body, the body of General
Intellect. Or, perhaps, ... will the becoming body of the General Intellect be
determined by the words the General intellect itself articulates, so that the General
Intellect becomes demiurge of its own body?” (“Qué hacer”).

In other words, two paths are possible. On one hand, there is no longer the need for an
intervention, not even an antipedagogical one. Nothing needs to be done. On the other
hand, some form of pedagogical vanguard might be necessary.

The prospect of an automatic politics is not the only possible reading of the
concept of conatus in Spinoza. Rather, it is the consequence of identifying desire with the
productive capacity of living labour. Such a positive reading of the striving of being does
not necessarily follow from Spinoza’s formulation of the notion of conatus, since for him
it refers to the effort of being to persevere in having both desires that take the form of
adequate ideas and active affects and desires that are inadequate ideas and passions. The
effort of being to persevere cannot be separated from the affections experimented at any
moment. Before introducing in it a political-economic correction, being, for Spinoza,
refers to modes of existence that are always multiple and affected in a great number of
ways, so that their potentia tends to oscillate, because the causes for its expansion or
reduction are accidental. Modes of existence are the bodies of things, animals and people.
Bodies can be individual or compositions made of several bodies, but they are always
constituted by many parts, and thus always exposed to multiple affects. All the bodies
form the same substance. The potentia of each mode is not a permanent, irreversible
condition and does not exist outside the act in which it arises. The conatus is always equal
to the potentia to act. If the potentia of a mode increases or diminishes, so will the effort
to persevere in its desire. Left at the mercy of random encounters and accidental causes of
affection, the conatus is dynamism without finality.

The subject arises from the conatus, but not spontaneously. It requires the patient
effort of organizing encounters, building common notions to assemble bigger, multiple
bodies, forming compositions that expand the potentiae of everyone involved. The art of
an intervention consists in the organization of the encounters in such a way that those
involved come to experience a greater number of adequate ideas, the kinds of ideas that
envelope their cause, different from inadequate ideas whose cause is accidental and
fluctuating. An adequate idea is one that opens up multiplicity, reveals that the situation is
infinite by showing that there is always more to it. While accidental ideas do not allow a
body to leave the universe of passions, in which we are acted upon rather than acting,
adequate ideas allow a body to appropriate its capacity to act. Adequate ideas are
resources to create compositions that form the modes of existence themselves. But the
mode, as it forms adequate ideas, becomes a singularity, a deliberate subtraction set aside
from the fluctuation of desire. In other words, militant is different from non-militant.
Spinoza’s concepts of beatitude and virtue define the passage between one and the other.
Beatitude refers not only to an expanded potentia, but also to a “full formal possession of
that potentia” (Deleuze, Practical Philosophy 51). Virtue refers to conatus and “potentia
as an efficient [i.e. non-accidental] cause, under the conditions of realization that enable it
to be possessed by the one who exercises it” (103). The subject appears in a gap. It is a
subject formed out of the perseverance of desire to a point of rupture, beyond the random
fluctuation of desire in the situation.

The source of militant commitment is the same vital impulse that animates the
perseverance of self in any living being. But militancy stretches the force of the conatus
beyond a conservative impulse of self-preservation. In this sense, the militant is driven by
an intensity greater than life itself. There is, in every militant, an effort to persevere in
existing that is not affected by utilitarian or instrumental calculations, by interests of any
kind, from job security and family relations to the militant’s life itself. Militancy is, in this
sense, a form of immortality. As Badiou puts it, the principle of militant activity is: “Do
all that you can to persevere in that which exceeds your perseverance. Persevere in the
interruption. Seize in your being that which has seized and broken you” (Ethics 47).
Militant activity is the striving of desire that is guided by a fidelity to something that is
not part of the knowledge available in the situation. Becoming militant is not the result of
knowing more or of having more access to the knowledge of the situation. From this
perspective, desire unfolds in the unconscious terrain of affects that arise in practice, not
in the conscious realm of reflection upon interests or in the sphere of communication of
opinions. The passage to politics is not about knowing, but about thinking in the situation.
That which has seized desire and drives it toward immortality keeps militant activity
alive.
Networks and Pedagogy: from General Intellect to Situated Ignorance

A focus on communication is at the root of the global conception of the multitude. The subversion of the productive powers of immaterial workers rich in communication capacities is fundamental to articulate the diverse points of antagonism. According to Hardt and Negri, the activity of those deeply involved in the production and reproduction of the communicative relations that keep Empire functioning can be redirected toward the production of the network that is going to confront Empire successfully, a counter-Empire shaped as “an alternative political organization of global flows and exchanges” (Empire xv). The communicative machine of global capitalism organizes, multiplies and structures interconnections. It manufactures modes of being and puts them in relation. Immaterial labour provides the subjective capacities and material connectivity necessary to confront Empire globally. Hardt and Negri’s hypothesis of a symmetrical antagonism between Empire and the multitude depends on communication to make the multitude consistent. Immanent pedagogy is neither an ideology nor a science that will end with the ideologies that becloud the consciousness of the working class. It is, rather, the communications network elevated to the status of a model practice of resistance. In Hardt and Negri’s view, the fact that the communicative dimension of living labour, manifest in today’s “symbolic analysts,” “problem solvers,” and “affective workers,” is at the core of both industrial productivity and imperial forms of sovereignty, creates the subjective conditions for “a materiality constituted in the networks of productive cooperation”, the multitude’s alternative to both the old Leninist perspective on seizing the state and anarchist anti-statism (Empire 349).

Hardt and Negri argue that networks and communication practices are structural components of Empire containing the virtualities that can be realized to coalesce the global multitude. As a subject “for itself,” the multitude is animated by decentred autonomous powers that originate in the reappropriation for subversive uses of the capacities for cooperation, communication, and affect normally invested in the production of value. Those working in communication- and affect-rich labour environments could create and maintain alternative networks by subverting the machines, linguistic signs, and affects they use to produce and reproduce forms of life in contemporary capitalism.
Imperial investment in systems of communication both disrupts the forces of localization—e.g. national sovereignty—and generates the networks that can integrate local struggles to form a global alternative to Empire. Hardt and Negri establish an analogy between the information superhighway and the communication networks built by the Roman Empire. What is new about the information infrastructure of global capitalism “is the fact that it is embedded within and completely immanent to the new production processes” (Empire 298). Much of the communication apparatus, including the broadcasting systems and the culture industries, functions as a series of oligopolistic mechanisms that reproduce top-down “tree structures.” Media conglomerates manipulate political participation, destroying collective forms of sociality through the broadcast of a spectacle whose effect is the reinforcement of the fear. Hardt and Negri argue that fear is the main mechanism of control in the society of the spectacle, which functions primarily “through the communication of fear” and the creation of “forms of desire and pleasure that are intimately wedded to fear” (Empire 323). If this was true in 1999, when Empire was published, it became perhaps too obvious after the declaration of the “War on Terror” by the US administration following the September 11, 2001 attacks. The examples in terms of news coverage are abundant, from avian flu scares to anthrax hoaxes to climate change. As Brian Massumi suggests, perhaps the most remarkable fear communication device of our times is the Homeland Security Advisory System, which uses colour-coded bars that are present on the screen during regular television programming, as naturally as the time and temperature indicators, to inform the viewers about how imminent the next terrorist attack is.

Telecommunication corporations compete to create an immense network of control, which the mergers and acquisitions of the last two decades have only reinforced in its oligopolistic aspects. To this Hardt and Negri contrast the portion of the information infrastructure that contains democratic mechanisms, such as the Internet, which, lacking a central point of control, contain possibilities of decentralization that give rise to nonhierarchical rhizome structures. Hardt and Negri borrow the tree/rhizome metaphor from the A Thousand Plateaus. Deleuze and Guattari, however, do not limit the metaphor to communication. Moreover, they insist that signification (linguistic communication) is only one among many regimes of signs.
The autonomist Marxist thesis on the circulation of struggles argues that there is a causal relation between communication networks and the navigation throughout the world of the disposition to struggle (Dyer-Witheford 130-64; Cleaver, "Marxian Categories" 36). When horizontal networks of communication bring situations close together the relation between the latter ceases to be mediated by transcendent figures of power. This notion of circulation or communication of struggles entrusts the relations between the singularities of the multitude to the unifying power of representation and consciousness.

However, Hardt and Negri suspend the functioning of the logic of the circulation of struggles for the case of Empire. Marx’s metaphor of the ‘old mole’ corresponded to the universality of a homogeneous proletariat. Today, however, the indigenous uprising in Chiapas, the Tiananmen Square revolt, and the riots in Los Angeles in the early 1990s are examples of explosive struggles that are both local and uncommunicable, that can “leap vertically and touch immediately on the global level” (Empire 55).

It is opportune to point out here that the use of information technology to form grassroots networks is not an exclusive practice of anticapitalist movements. Different kinds of political groups, from neo-nazis to different kinds of outlawed organizations take advantage of computers and the Internet. Intelligence and military strategy is also moving towards forms of organization based on decentered networks. Indeed, there is absolutely no thing, text or idea whose political value is decided once and for all. Even the works of such radical philosophers as Badiou, Deleuze and Guattari may one day be used for surveillance and repression. For example, Eyal Weizman, in his article “The Art of War,” interviews an Israel Defence Forces general who explains to him how his army uses ideas from A Thousand Plateaus to design new counterinsurgency tactics.

Nevertheless, the appropriation of the communications network by grassroots movements remains a key moment in Hardt and Negri’s conception of the passage of the global multitude from the virtual to the real. The universality built on communications is indifferent to the situated determinations at each point of the multitude. It gives primacy to representation and downplays the compositions at work in each situation. The global concept of the multitude does not start from the confrontation with capitalism in the situation, the concrete production of alternative values, modes of being and forms of life, the expansion of multiple and situated powers to act. It starts, rather, from the abstraction
of concrete existence. From the perspective of a politics in and for the situation, it matters little whether the individual-spectator is sitting in front of a computer writing messages to a progressive listserv or watching soap operas on television as long as her "world" is separated from the concrete situation, the only one where she can expand her power to act. Becoming subject requires a subtraction from the network.

Deleuze and Negri once had a discussion on this precise topic. Negri asked: "In the Marxist utopia of the Grundrisse, communism takes precisely the form of a transversal organization of free individuals built on a technology that makes it possible.... Maybe in a communication society [communism is] less utopian than it used to be?" (Deleuze, "Control" 174). Deleuze replied that the potential of communication machines is of little significance outside the social apparatus of control which they are part. The society of communication, he continued, has "nothing to do with minorities speaking out. ... Creating has always been something different from communicating" (175). Becoming a subject is not only indifferent to communication; it is its opposite. The becoming of a minority is an act of creation removed from the majoritarian common sense. As such, a minority is cut out from common sense; it defines a separate time, a distinctive space, and its own horizon of meaning. If the minority allows representation to include it in the count, it ceases to be a minority to become a discernible part of the majority world-view. If this is the case, the majority will always find a safe place to put the minority, ensure it is included, and even receive congratulations from its progressive side because the minority speaks out. On the contrary, a subject lasts as long as its becoming-minority lasts. If becoming a subject has to do with creating, it is because the condition of a subject as such depends on its ability to sustain its singularity as a rupture that is both concrete and universal. The abstract universals of the society of communication only contribute to produce the world as One situation. Indeed, "the quest for 'universals of communication' ought to make us shudder" (Deleuze, "Control" 175). No rupture results from the inclusion of one more voice in the world of consensus that communication machines make possible. A subject irrupts when there is a creation that refuses identification and upsets consensus: "The key thing may be to create vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers, so we can elude control" (175).
This raises an important question. How is it possible to conceive the many as many without communication? There are a multiplicity of resistances that attain some degree of coordination, remaining multiple without being explicitly linked through communication networks. The multitude understood as integrated by communicative networks privileges the more abstract encounters. The multitude conceived as multiple situations does not need the consistency given by linguistic bonds. In this multitude, a singularity is connected to others not through communication, but rather by expressive bonds. This is a different kind of multitude, one in which no specialized function defines a centre. It is a multitude that never thinks or acts globally and whose multiple points come into existence as long as they think politics in their situations.

Singularities resonate with one another beyond their locales because they contain a dimension that is universal. The medium through which this resonance travels is capitalism itself (Holloway, "Resonancia"). A logic of expression conceives resonance because, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, “there is a continuum of all of the attributes or genuses of intensity under a single substance, and a continuum of the intensities of a certain genus under a single type or attribute” (A Thousand Plateaus 154). Capitalism connects the situations through invisible, not necessarily explicit, links. Even before European migrant workers begin to make graffiti of Zapatista slogans, they are related to Chiapas by the global transformation of capitalist relations of the last decades. None of them is less of a part of this transformation. Capitalist relations exist only in situations. They are universal only because they adopt concrete forms—in Chiapas the threat of further displacement of communities and the enclosure of land, in Europe the recomposition of labour relations that increases precariousness, in Iraq, Afghanistan and Haiti it comes in the shape of war and invasion. The struggle against these forms in each situation is concrete. If resistance is effective, it will resonate with others. In other words, a situation’s possibility to become part of networks is not something to be introduced, but to be found by the situation within itself (Benasayag and Sztulwark 107-8). As discussed in the first chapter, what is to be found is the void, the point at which the consistency of each situation structured by capitalist relations comes apart.

The production of a new time and space in the situation requires new compositions of minds and bodies. But composition is much more than creating networks.
Networks can sometimes exist only as an explicit level of relations. Explicit networks, as Colectivo Situaciones calls them, keep alive norms that regulate the forms of inclusion and exclusion, which may not be those of the market and representation, but still remain forms that police the flows and borders of the networks (19 y 20 198-204). Explicit networks always end up colonizing the situations and virtualizing their *potentia*. Many experiments that emerged with the Argentine crisis, such as the barter network and the coordination of popular assemblies, succumbed to the pedagogy of networks as they prioritized the explicit form of their mutual relationships over the unfolding of activity in and for each situation. In the case of barter the explicit network appeared as an inevitable consequence of the volume of the transactions. The original nodes or “barter clubs” were intended for exchanges between producers who were also consumers, most of them people who had lost their jobs and had skills to manufacture goods or deliver services they could trade. The original idea was to measure the value of the traded goods and services in terms of hours of work. But, after the collapse of the economy in December 2001, barter became the only source of goods and services for over six million people. The original, mostly local, networks became an immense economy that even had to print its own currency (Colectivo Situaciones, “Club del Trueque”). At that point, the barter currency came to occupy a similar place as money in any nation’s economy: it became a medium to exchange abstract labour time and producers lost control of the value it represented. As Marx anticipated in his discussions with the Proudhonists in the “Chapter on Money” of the *Grundrisse*, the dream of an economy based on “labour money” melted in the air.

In contrast, composition is the art of creating not explicit but *diffuse* networks, formed by situations that subtract themselves from communicative bonds and affirm themselves as creative singularities. A diffuse network exists as connections between groups confronting common problems, each of them generating resonances as they think with their bodies in situation. In Argentina, diffuse networks without any form of coordination have been at work, for instance, among many unemployed workers movements, peasants movements, neighbourhood assemblies, human rights groups, art collectives, and organizations in defense of factory occupations. Of course, there is
communication among these groups, but it never becomes equivalent to the definition of the network.

To supplement what they saw as an excessive focus on immaterial and incorporeal aspects of production by other theorists of operaismo, Hardt and Negri turned to the notion of biopolitics (Empire 22-41). The current form of capitalist production is biopolitical because it exploits the entire scope of life. The relationships established through cooperation, communication technologies, public relation practices, marketing techniques, branding of spaces, the care of mind and body, among other activities, constitute the substance of biopolitical production. Biopolitics accounts for the increasing convergence of economic production and political constitution. It blurs the distinctions between the mechanisms that produce value and those of surveillance and control. The building blocks of consensual democracy are biopolitical.

The corrective Hardt and Negri introduce is a political economy of affective labour, in which the body appears not as a site of thinking in and for the situation, but rather as a knowable body, the general body that accompanies the general intellect: postmodern labour is "the productive activity of a general intellect and a general body outside measure" (Empire 358). The political significance of the body is restricted to the causal relation the authors have established between productive labour and politics. The affects that fall under the gaze of the political economy of immaterial labour and the general body of the multitude are not the most interesting from the authors' point of view of what politics consists of.

The multitude modeled after the communicative network removes the body from the scene in a very important way: as the existential articulation of thought. There is no question that life today is permeated by communication and that "language, as it communicates, produces commodities but moreover creates subjectivities, puts them in relation, and orders them" (Hardt and Negri, Empire 33). But this is politically useful only as long as we do not forget that communication, insofar as it flattens the infinite dimensions of experience, does not capture the embodiment of thought. Action is never separate from the speech used to coordinate activities with others through networks of communication. But still, speech does not communicate experience. What mediated communication does not communicate are the resistances that appear whenever it is
forgotten that the body is involved in every thinking process. For experience tends to resist being reduced to what can be known about it. It is the resistance that activists and scholars face when they, for example, produce representations about a certain movement. There is an immanence of affects, friendships, convictions, modes of inhabiting space and grasping time invested in the relations within the movement that resist being turned into communicable matter. Thought ought not to be reduced to mental activity and communication to what explicitly passes through the networks. From the point of view of the embodied beings that we are, politics, the real acts of freedom in the situation, requires that we do not naturalize the separation of the body from the mind, and the disciplining of the former by the latter.

Despite the references of biopolitics to affect and the body, Hardt and Negri assume unproblematically the abstract character of the compositions that can be built on the basis of what political economy illuminates about biopolitics. They downplay the differences between linguistic mutual understanding and the embodiment of thought in both individual and collective practices. The body is a politically relevant category not as the object of a sociology or a political economy that scrutinizes the ways in which it appears in production and reproduction, but rather as the seat of actions and passions that constantly expand and diminish potentia. The body is a point of departure for practical investigations whose orientations cannot be predetermined. The knowledges of a situation are incarnated in relations between bodies. Even among those who study cognition there is a growing agreement “that knowledge is about situatedness; and that the uniqueness of knowledge, its historicity and context, is not a ‘noise’ concealing an abstract configuration in its true essence” (Varela 7).

In this sense, the only possible way to know a situation is through a practical research of its existential possibilities in which the only certain thing is that nobody can anticipate what bodies can do. The point of view of the body is that of a radical ignorance. It is from this non-knowledge that it is possible to deal with the questions concerning the expansion of potentia. But, the body is only a point of departure, for politics arises when the concern for the finitude of the body stops. There is nothing political in preserving the body, for subjectivation occurs invoking capacities that affirm a surplus of life. Human beings are different from animals in that, at certain moments, we
can defy the finitude of life and exercise “the rights of the Infinite … over the
contingency of suffering and death” (Badiou, *Ethics* 12). For there to be politics there has
to be a *potentia* of the desire to live that cannot affirm itself without negating life as it is
merely *kept alive* by consensual democracy.88

**An Ethical Multitude**

Once immaterial labour is removed from its centre, the multitude can be
conceived as multiple singularities, none of which is in a privileged position to confront
capitalism because of the place it occupies in the division of labour or anywhere else.
There is no question that work continues to be a central mechanism of domination in
capitalist society. Its centrality is determined not by a particular form of producing value
but by its use by capital to exercise command throughout almost every situation.

In this sense, the concept of the multitude describes a historical dynamic that is no
longer bound to the dialectic of class contradiction. This, however, does not mean that the
multitude is driven by a positive constituent power. The multitude is a category of
multiplicity. It does not explain rupture as a clash of antagonistic poles such as the
proletariat and the bourgeoisie after which a new synthesis is formed (and policed by the
socialist state). There is not a homogeneous society after the rupture in relation to which
the multitude appears as chaos to be ordered. The multitude only affirms the
heterogeneity of multiple singularities: multiple departures from the norm that remain
politically active as long as they are not absorbed into a new norm. This would be a
multitude that exists as multiple manifestations of the Two. It is at this point that one can
agree with Badiou’s critique of Hardt and Negri’s multitude. For Badiou, if we abandon
the conception of politics as contradiction we are left with two possibilities: “one is the
return to a unitary conception, there is no contradiction; there is power of the One.” Negri
takes the first path. The other possibility, the one embraced by Badiou, is “to preserve the
Two, but as something different from the contradiction.” The Two preserved as “the
element of the distance, of independence, of the separation of that which is
heterogeneous” (“Distancia” 24).

The multitude are eccentric, diffusely coordinated local points of resistance, each
engaged in its own situated struggle to create new social relations. The formation of
networks is not a strategy, but rather an outcome of the situated creation of collective
bonds alternative to capitalist relations. Beyond the acts of resistance and creation in each situation, the multitude lacks political significance. The multitude cannot become a global, all-encompassing “situation of situations” because that would amount to reducing the multiple singularities to one explanatory principle. The multiple would be One.

The multitude has no consistency. It is pure presentation without representation and this is not experienced as a lack, a deficiency of political significance that would require the intervention of an agent (a Party of sorts) to produce articulations, assemble hegemonies, or produce explicit networks of any kind between the parts of the multitude.

The multitude can be everywhere, but it is not global. It becomes a multitude for itself only at the end of a patient process of composition that always begins at the local level. The resulting networks are diffuse, unorganized, leaving room for “many types of encounters, of many partial explicit networks … as many networks as becomings the experiment (experiencia) in question can open” (Colectivo Situaciones, Hipótesis 220). Only in retrospect, looking backwards while being propelled by an irresistible force to the future, like Paul Klee’s Angelus Novus, is it possible to say that the many have acted as many, as a multitude for itself (Benjamin 257). The network is not the focus of political action. It is rather the outcome of many situations expanding their potentiae both autonomously and in resonance with one another.

This multitude is not a subject and cannot aspire to be the author of an insurrection. Politics is not a goal of the many as many, but something that happens when the unaccounted for, in their singularity, irrupt to verify that they are equal to everybody else. This would not be possible without a sovereign production of time and space in each situation; without a local declaration of autonomy that interrupts the time of the circulation of commodities (including symbolic commodities and labour power) and the space of representation of the media spectacle and of the state.

The situations that can be inhabited today are not created ex nihilo. They are constructed upon the fragmented social landscape left by the demolition of the welfare state and its institutions, the destruction of collective meanings by market instrumentalism and commodification, and, in the end, upon the exhaustion of the forms of socialization in place over the last two centuries (Lewkowicz, Cantarelli et al. 92-96). Globalization fractures the nation-state as a cohesive force and creates a landscape of relatively loose
fragments whose main articulation to the others is the market. It is from these fragments that concrete forms of non-capitalist existence are created today (Colectivo Situaciones, 19 y 20 191-93).

Each situation expresses the problematic of our times, which exists there only in concrete form. In the formation of alternative networks the bonds are not built on the basis of agreements that consolidate larger identities (fronts, federations, etc.) or secured by linguistic exchange. The shared resonances of different points of intense potentia bring the network into existence by making possible relations of friendship and affinity.

The logic of expression makes it possible to conceive an immanent universality of situations, each radically singular and subtracted from any notion of “the world” as a single reality. As opposed to the transhistoric modern subject, fastened to the myth of progress, conscious producer of the world, and confident in its capacities to change the course of history, contemporary subjects are not guided toward an end other than expanding their potentia in their situation. They produce universal values of freedom, equality, and justice here and now. From their situation, each of them speaks to everybody. We can see examples in as different expressions of the multitude as women’s liberation movements (those that, in their struggle for equality, problematize the order of things, but not those that only seek to affirm an identity or to be included in the current order), Madres de Plaza de Mayo, the Zapatistas, some unemployed workers groups in Argentina, and landless peasant movements, among many others.

Subtraction, self-affirmed marginalization, as Colectivo Situaciones calls it, is a key moment in the affirmation of potentia. It is an ethical operation whose conception of practice starts not from a global vision, but from the standpoint of the singular modes of experience seeking to expand their potentia. Subtraction is anti-normative. More than rejecting specific norms, it refuses normative functioning as such (19 y 20, 196). It is an ethical operation in that each situation affirms itself as such, unplugging itself from the networks, separating itself from the globality—from the perspective of thinking and acting globally—and reappropriating the concrete forms in which power to act can be expanded.

The notions that are most useful for politics are those formed in the situations we inhabit, which is where exploitation and domination manifest themselves as concrete
limits to life. Situated practice is the practice of an inquiry, both theoretical and practical, whose only guidance are concrete exigencies of justice and freedom.

Beyond each situation there are only other situations. In this sense, “the world,” “society,” or even the multitude only exist as imaginary references to multiple situated practices. Benasayag and Sztulwark argue that society only exists as a mechanism of closure, an “imaginary of completeness, a united and homogeneous representation of the infinite real, of the multiple situations” (57). Foucault used to say that the individual is an effect of power. We could add that society is another effect of power. This rejection of society as One does not have the same sense as Margaret Thatcher’s comment that “there is not such a thing as ‘society’.” Her statement celebrates the individual as a fragment, a being unconnected to others but for his/her selfish and competitive drives. Thatcher’s individuals are the result of neoliberal enclosures: isolated from each other, left to their own resources, and forced to work harder in order to have money to pay for services to which they used to have easier access through the welfare state. Only by forgetting the genealogy of the individual can we think of it as cut off from the multitude.

If we receive with anxiety the affirmation that there is no society but situations, it is because we live in societies in which political representation and the media spectacle continue to produce the world as a single situation. This does not mean that the state or other central configurations of sovereign power are illusions. It just means that their materiality is an effect of the composition and intensity of multiple potentiae that exist only in situation. The political can be conceived as a separate sphere, and as a separate site of power, only if one adopts an idealist stance that ignores that the constitution of its centrality results from the delegation of multiple potentiae.

The state, the administrative bodies and institutions, their legitimacy and representation are all conditioned by what happens in the material and concrete dimension of each situation. The dynamics of sovereignty depends on whether the situations are politicized or not. The forces that limit the power of sovereignty are the result of multiple acts of giving up situated potentiae.

As potentia shrinks throughout the multiple situations—as they are overcome by sadness, as Spinoza would say—the centrality of sovereignty gains strength. The efficacy of sovereign power is directly correlated to a generalized saddening of situated practices.
It appears as if the world we live in presents us with few options other than becoming more nihilist, indifferent to others and sheltered in our private lives; as if all that can be done is to live lives that do not belong to us, in which there is little we can do to alter the course of events. Capitalism is sustained by the administration of life, policed through numerous mechanisms of discipline and control that wither multiplicity. The culture of pleasure, fun and amusement of advanced capitalism is not an exception to sadness. Rather, hedonism is consistent with the logic of control because it is premised upon a lack that pleasure is supposed to fulfill, but it never does, even when somebody’s pursuit of pleasure can afford to become endless. This lack appears as sadness when one measures oneself from a moral vision of the world in which good and evil are already decided. The expansion of potentia and the overcoming of sadness are one and the same thing. The joy of taking possession of one’s power to act cannot be achieved by embracing established forms of having fun, but by abandoning the moral vision that creates separate, specialized moments and places for coming to terms with desire. Not only is hedonism a moral perspective on desire, but also pleasure, as a state that can be achieved, interrupts and silences desire (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 154).

Benasayag and Sztulwark argue that the only possible politics today is the struggle against and beyond capitalism in the situation, affirming the multiplicity of life and resisting its one-dimensionalization. Politics, in this sense, is “the subjectivity of radical antagonism here and now with regard to the world organized by capital” (47). In a world dominated by sadness and fear sometimes there is no need of tyrants or dictators to maintain tyrannies in place. To reclaim joy and desires that express an expansive life, a life that affirms in action its situated potentia by constructing concrete, non-capitalist collective bonds, is a subversive act. We are responsible for the situations we live in and it is up to us to inhabit them as modes of situated existence. It is up to us to investigate the points of inconsistency, the possibilities of enlarging multiplicity and expanding potentia.

War, fear, sadness, depression, boredom, extinction of desire—all are signs of the weakening of our potentia or power to act. But, even in the midst of sadness, acts of resistance happen that produce a new sociability. The pursuit of joy is, in this regard, subversive. Today, to be a rebel is not to embrace different opinions, but to think practices that affirm life against generalized sadness and fragmentation. To create and
keep open the ways in which potentia expands is central to this praxis. Politics ceases to be materialist when it thinks globally, when its focus is an imaginary of power beyond the situation. It is then when it ceases to deal with the reality of potentia.

The expansion of potentia can never be resolved by gaining full awareness of the conditions of exploitation in general. By themselves, representations of capitalism as a system of exploitation can hardly bring us beyond a position as individual-spectators. They do not necessarily lead to awareness of what we can do, and can even amplify our sense of isolation and impotence. Situational thought is an investigation into the concrete ways in which power relations are constituted. Politics as situated practice takes place right on the same surface where apparatuses of discipline and control act. Situated politics grows from below and stays below, following a path that proceeds from encounters between bodies, to the formation of common notions and compositions, to the autonomous development of counterpowers that are formed in struggles.

The power to act in each situation resonates in others. That is why, even though situated action is, by definition, restricted, it is simultaneously aimed beyond the situation. Compositions strengthen the situations singularly and define interconnections that neither separate the potentiae from the represented bodies nor transfer them to an imagined centrality (Benasayag and Sztulwark 66). In other words, the figures of resistance to globalization are not to be found in a counter-globalization or a possible alternative world economy and politics. A global anti-capitalist response to the assumed globality of capitalism is "materially impossible, because capitalism only exists as a permanent globalization-separation whose materiality is in concrete situations, under the form of the virtualization of life" (221). The alternative to the politics of global capital is a subtractive politics of situations.

Marx argued persuasively that capitalism is the rule of dead abstractions over living beings. It is at the microscopic level of power relations, in the lines of force that produce subjectivity, where the support for the dominations and hegemonies of society originate and are constantly maintained. Several writers, including Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari, Hardt, Negri, Virno and authors from the tradition of operaismo have made fundamental contributions to understanding the local and concrete forms of the production of domination. This is the level at which power relations have to be
confronted, disorganized, and changed. It is in those confrontations, disorganizations, and changes—or the inability to carry them out—where it is possible to register the expansions and contractions of potentia. The terrain of engagement of non-spectacular politics is the expansion of power to act, to affect, and be affected. Potentia, like freedom, is always active creation, becoming. Because it is immanent to existence, potentia can, therefore, neither be delegated nor conceived as a permanent feature of a society, past, present or future. Communism, in this sense, is “an ontological requirement to be on the side of life.” It is “an exigency here and now, an active and present subjectivity, a requirement of Being itself, of life” (Benasayag and Sztulwark 62). This subjectivity is the practice of a fidelity to the expansion of the power to act. Outside this practice, nobody is a communist.

A struggle in a situation does more than thinking locally and acting locally because it is a re-totalization. Its practice dissolves abstractions and historicizes power relations locally. The perspective of the situation is materialist because it looks into efficient causes and real forces. An investigation of those forces is an inquiry into the universal that is in the part. In situation, we act politically—we pass from actions that expand our potentia to politics—as long as we confront those forces in their concrete manifestations.

A situated perspective of multiple resistances helps dismiss any centrality within the multitude. Immaterial labour—if we agree with the concept—may have easier access to global communication networks or a hands-on relation to the circuits of biopolitical production. However, this immanent relation to the networks does not seem to be enough justification to confer immaterial labour a better position in the arduous task of constructing the languages sensitive to difference and singularity that consolidate the multitude as asymmetric and centrifugal points of force. From many other positions, as Colectivo Situaciones has shown in the militant research it has conducted with different autonomous social movements in Argentina, there are numerous forms of situated practices creating modes of existence that are, in situation, superior to those offered by capitalism. Their potentia materializes as thought in action, as a philosophy of praxis built in the struggle to escape individualism. In these movements and experiments, potentia appears as embodied quests to assert dignity in the midst of marginalization, seeking to
form common notions and to organize joyful encounters that avoid hierarchical orderings and abstract slogans. This makes possible an ethical resistance of the kind Spinoza considered to be the basis of a democracy of the multitude.
Chapter Five
Common Notions: Research Militancy as Antipedagogy in Colectivo Situacions

Common Notions: Collective Bonds without the Metaphysics of Representation

Something stops whenever the claim to knowledge affirms someone’s authority. Positive knowledge creates safe and cozy places where the wise can rest and take a break from asking questions, generally under the auspices of institutions that sanction the validity of their knowledge and authority. But no matter how definitive knowledge appears to be, the desire to live—the resistance of the real—comes back to prove that the knowledgeable do not know anything. No matter how much knowledge “evolves” or “progresses,” it always stops short of grasping the real.

Ignorance has to be distinguished from doubt. Since Descartes, doubt has been a motor of knowledge, the link between the modern ideal of progress and the elimination of uncertainty. Cartesian doubt can be seen as a line of deterritorialization in relation to earlier philosophies. However, the cogito—the “I think”—instituted as the foundation of being amounts to a reterritorialization of thought as scientific knowledge (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 128). But the functioning of ignorance as doubt—ignorance driven by lack of knowledge—leads only to poor results. No science has succeeded in modeling human behaviour adequately. Yet, the modern social sciences built their prestige on their ability to produce theories and prophesies on the basis of interpretations qualified as objective. These utilitarian interpretive machines presuppose that human action consists of a rational agent pursuing the satisfaction of its needs (Benasayag and Charlton 28-9). In contrast, the standpoint of an ignorance not satisfied by knowledge seeks to put thought in motion.

Ignorance is ridiculed by the argument that the world is incomprehensible for anyone but the experts, for whom it would have no secrets, while the large majority of humanity cannot grasp how the world works (Colectivo Situaciones, 19 y 20 167-68; Benasayag and Sztulwark 122). The paradox, in the age of knowledge, of a world that
cannot be known by most people, and is therefore impossible to change, is the ideological support for a postmodern nihilism that kills from the outset any emancipatory impulse.

Cartesian doubt contrasts with Socratic ignorance. We would make Socrates into a caricature if we considered his method a declaration of the unknowability of the world. The kind of ignorance conceived by Socrates is liberating because, instead of pretending to be the motor of the knowledge necessary to transform a “world” that increasingly seems out of our grasp (the spectacular concept of the world as a single situation), it is a non-knowledge that asks questions to open new becomings in the situation, the world that we can change. No longer asked from a separate standpoint, the questions structure situational practice. In this sense, ignorance “forces us to invent definitions in every situation,” because it is a practical experience and not something to be taught and communicated (Colectivo Situaciones, Conocimiento Inútil). However, turned into a method—a lesson imparted by a pedagogue—Socratic ignorance inevitably becomes another pedagogy. Socrates’ interrogation of Meno’s slave is a clear example of how “the learned master’s science makes it very difficult for him not to spoil the method.” In this sense, as Rancière points out, “the Socratic method is ... a perfected form of stultification” (Ignorant Schoolmaster 29). Nietzsche, for his part, considered Socrates to be one of the forefathers of pedagogy: “Socrates and his successors, down to our own day, have considered all moral and sentimental accomplishments—noble deeds, compassion, self-sacrifice, heroism, even that spiritual calm, so difficult of attainment, which the Apolonian Greek called sophrosyne—to be ultimately derived from the dialectic of knowledge, and therefore teachable” (Birth of Tragedy 94).

Ignorance liberates from the belief that thought is exhausted in reason, from the arrogance of reason that claims to be able to understand the totality of existence. To take the position of ignorance is to postulate a human experience whose horizon is not limited by utilitarianism and conscious reason. Ignorance, when conceived in this vein, is ethical in Spinoza’s sense, while research that improves knowledge operates within a moral vision of the world. In this vision, the passage to action of a subject consists in the conscious realization of an essence that exists only as potentiality. In a moral world, determinations proceed from the large aggregates, from the One to the parts whose
detailed counting is knowledge's task. In the moral vision it is the least ignorant who should ideally be in command. This view tends to naturalize the reign of the philosopher king, and of his present-day offshoots, the miriads of soft-mannered sociologist kings, custodians of the machine of consensus that reduces politics to police.

Ethics, as Spinoza conceives it, short-circuits the moral machine. From an ethical standpoint nothing is general or constant. There are no essences that need to be realized; ethics have no telos. Ethics is concerned with becoming. From this point of view, being is never One, it is always a composition of multiple parts that are, in turn, multiple. Instead of judging, ethics asks questions about the modes of existence. The emergence of a political subject is an ethical operation. An ethical subject is not a group that acquires a cognitive content, but, as Rancière argues, “an operator that unites and disunites different areas, regions, identities, functions, and capacities existing in the configuration of a given experience” (Disagreement 40). The subject exists in that act and is nothing outside it.

Hence the radical nature of Spinoza’s cry of ethical ignorance: nobody has determined yet what a body can do. For Spinoza, the essence of each person coincides with what that person can do. Ethics knows nothing in advance because the actions and passions each person is capable of are defined in action. The question regarding potentia is a question posed from ignorance that opens toward a practical exploration. It is neither feigned ignorance nor a posture assumed in the research situation for the sake of advancing research, but rather the legitimate, honest ignorance of those who ask questions in order to know.

Ignorance is a standpoint that, in the situation, inquires into the paths that lead to the expansion of potentia. An ethics of ignorance moves within the horizon of practice in the situation. In strict materialist terms, it is concerned with the constant variation that results from the actions of specific bodies over other bodies and the affections that result from those actions.

Ethics is materialist because it recognizes that thought involves much more than consciousness and language. If there is thought beyond what our conscious reason can grasp, how to trace its development? How to use it practically, to construct the common bonds that are constitutive of politics as a collective thought without falling back onto the terrain of moral essences? Spinoza constructs the ethical procedure as a phenomenology.
of affects. The mind can do as much as the body can do, not more. The entire possibility of an ethical vision of the world depends on the parallelism between body and mind. Ethics adopts an ethological perspective, interested in the genesis of powers to affect and to be affected that arise from relations between bodies (Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy* 125).91

For Spinoza, the ethical question is how to be capable of actions, knowing that, in the conditions under which we live, we go from sadness to joy and back to sadness in an endless succession of affects, a cyclical eternal return from which there seems to be no way out unless there is a subjective effort. In these conditions, our power to be affected and our capacity to act seem condemned to their minimum expression.

Each encounter brings about multiple determinations that affect us in ways that cannot be known by a mental effort involving the inadequate ideas that we have. If we do not experience uncertainty all the time, it is because we rely on systems of laws, classifications and judgement to make life bearable, less risky, more predictable. In this way, individuals lose uncertainty, entrust themselves to socially sanctioned knowledge, but, in exchange, renounce a significant part of their power to act. The exercise of power—from feudal despots, to religious leaders, to postmodern rulers of consensual democracies—has always depended on a certain ability to manage sad passions. In order to be able to rule, a ruler needs her subjects to be sad, because those affected by sadness find their power to act diminished. Deleuze points out that this is, in Spinoza’s view, the “profound point of connection between the despot and the priest—they both need the sadness of their subjects.” For Spinoza sadness is not a vague concept but rather a rigorous one. For him, sadness is a condition determined by affects that “involves the reduction of my power to act” (*En medio* 173).

Ethical ignorance is faithful to chance. It treats each encounter as a singular and unique composition. It thus opens the possibility for an alternative organization of *encounters*, one in which the judgements that normalize and call for order are no longer necessary to counteract the uncertainty of chance. An organization of encounters opens toward the organization of life in common on the basis of different bonds, built on the basis of concrete compositions that reunite people with their power to act. Spinoza calls
common notions the bond that arises from the formation of adequate (i.e. concrete) ideas in common.

Ethics brings the question what is to be done? to a materialist terrain by asking how can we form common notions? The formation of common notions is a process that begins by observing that in a state of sadness no common notions are possible. Sad passions keep us separate from our power to act. To abandon sadness it is necessary to expand our joyful passions. By refusing sadness we are on the way to being in possession of our potentia. The goal is to abandon joy as defined by passions and to turn it into the experience of sovereign actions. Spinoza argues that the formation of common notions is a decisive moment in the passage from passions to actions. This is because, in Spinoza’s ethics, to have notions in common, people require more than the sole agreement between the rational ideas that come out of their minds. Common notions are formed in the local and concrete terrain of affects that emerge in the encounter between bodies. A common notion is a bond formed by reciprocal affect. Joy enables a leap beyond the world of sad passions. It “precipitates us into a world of concrete ideas that sweep sad affects or struggle with them.” There is, in every moment of joy, “the potentiality of a common notion” (Deleuze, En medio 186). And there is, in the formation of a common notion, a potential for the formation of a singularity; that is, a potential rupture.

I have argued that politics is a thought that anybody can think. It does not require specialists. Its truths are purely subjective. Are we not getting too close to idealism? What I would like to argue is that Spinoza’s common notions provide a materialist foundation for conceiving politics as a thought. But, in what sense are these notions materialist?

Common notions are always concrete. They are a thought of and for the situation. The stuff of which they are made includes affects that are the effect of the actions of bodies on other bodies. There are no abstract universal common notions because there is nothing that is good for every body. Common notions are, at the same time, individual and collective. The questions about how to form common notions, how to leave sad passions behind, how to form adequate ideas, are directly related to the art and craft of organizing encounters. The encounter is a fundamental concept in Spinoza. It is his theory of encounters that has earned him a reputation as a materialist philosopher. In an encounter with somebody (or something) all we know is how that person (or thing)
affects us at that moment. Before any speculation there is the experience of an affect. Affects are not a moment of perception that comes before our minds can process what it is getting through the senses. Rather, affects are already thought, “a mode of thought that does not represent anything” (Deleuze, En medio 173). A materialist logic of affects is grounded in encounters; it is not idealist because it does not reduce the world to the ideas we have, nor is it realist, because it is not concerned with the reality “out there” beyond the notions we can form (175).

The notion of encounter allows Spinoza (and Deleuze) to avoid what Heidegger calls the “scandal of philosophy”: the need to prove that there are things out there, outside our minds. While idealists have claimed that the reality of the external world cannot be proven, realists (i.e. positivists) conceive knowledge (primarily science) as a way of determining the world that exists outside our minds (Being and Time 244-52). Spinoza does not solve the problem of the outside world. Instead, by defining everything in terms of degrees of potentia that change depending on affects, which in turn depend on compositions between bodies, he eliminates the notion that there is such a thing as an external world. We are “beings in the world” insofar as we are our potentia. As Deleuze puts it, “in the limit Nature as a whole is a single Animal in which only the relations between parts vary” (Expressionism 278).

While a moral vision of the world distributes ranks, words, functions, and people according to ideas of Good and Evil, an ethical vision proceeds from the immediacy of encounters. Encounters fall into two types: they can be good or bad. In a bad encounter, the internal relation that defines the composition between the parts of a body is upset. The falling apart of this relation is the sadness of this body. Contrast, a good encounter strengthens the internal relations of a body because it increases its joyful passions. When these encounters take place, it is possible “to form a notion of what is common to the body that affects you and to your own body, to the soul [or mind] that affects you and to your own soul [or mind]. In this sense joy makes [people] intelligent” (Deleuze, En medio 185). Good encounters are those that make us acquire adequate ideas of other bodies and of our own body. It is from these concrete ideas that we can expand our power to act, our potentia.
My argument is that only those capable of sufficient ignorance—those capable of considering that the thought we think through our affects is not secondary to the rational ideas we have—can position themselves in the path to building and helping build common notions. This ignorance can be achieved only practically, that is, as a series of experiences of encounters with other bodies. Common notions are not the result of a process of introspection, self-reflexivity, or a purely linguistic communicative practice because what we know of ourselves is incomplete unless we know the effects of other bodies on our body. Antipedagogy is materialist because it follows the method of common notions. With all the limitations of a mechanical metaphor, it is possible to say that the organization of good encounters that make it possible to have and sustain common notions amounts to the assembly of a living machine, a process that proceeds from the most minuscule cogs, wheels, pulleys and cables, to the larger internal devices, to the full system.

Marta Malo, of the Spanish militant research collective Precarias a la Deriva (Precarious Women Adrift), has noted how the path that leads to potentia requires a disposition to “begin an uncertain journey in search for common notions against the sad passions of fragmentation, precariousness, and fear” (39). In research militancy, potentia becomes a synonym for a politics whose requisite is an ongoing quest to form common notions, a politics that militant researchers embrace knowing that they do not know what bodies can do. Research militancy is a pursuit that requires one to think with the body, to be there, right where the notions are produced, for “organization criteria and principles only have meaning when they are supported by a practice: if they are severed from that content, they profoundly damage the organization” (MTD de Solano in Hipótesis 232). Benasayag and Sztulwark express this with their own paraphrases of Marx’s Thesis XI: “philosophers have devoted themselves to interpret the body, the point is to be able to do something with it” (78). Because potentia is a permanent and immanent becoming, to try to say what the body can do while doing nothing with it is to accept a pseudouniversal, external perspective that assumes the idealistic possibility of a solely imaginary position.

Colectivo Situaciones: Thinking by “Putting the Body”

During the 1990s, the struggles for justice and dignity of unemployed workers, relatives of the disappeared, peasants, students, victims of police repression, and a
number of other groups began to confirm that a new ethical movement, a diffuse network of resistance, was emerging in Argentina. These struggles affirmed themselves against the neoliberal reduction of all aspects of life to economic motivations and against the evident emptiness of consensual democracy. These struggles also affirmed themselves against a traditional left-wing militancy that devalued the local knowledges of resistance and subordinated them to strategic calculations of relations of forces, hierarchizations of subjects, and party priorities. Instead of pushing for inclusion in the networks of capital, an important portion of the new forms of resistance has sought to assert their marginalization and to create new worlds for people to inhabit.\textsuperscript{93}

A non-exhaustive list of these struggles includes the unemployed workers or piqueteros, workers occupying bankrupt factories and running them under their control, a new generation of human rights groups that no longer demand justice but produce it, popular assemblies in the neighbourhoods of major cities, experimental economies based in solidarity and barter removed from the abstract principles of the market, alternative projects of health, education, communication and art. In many cases these resistances intersect, with the result of unexpected openings and compositions.

These expressions of counterpower confirmed that intellectuals can no longer claim to be the consciousness that is not present inside the movements. Argentina’s new protagonism demands a disposition to assume the situated character of social insurgency and the creative powers of its resistance.

In Argentina, people who play soccer use the expression poner el cuerpo (to put the body) to describe an intensity of commitment to the game. It refers to those who, more than relying on precise passes or dexterous dribbling, bring about all their courage and fighting spirit to stop dangerous adversaries or to charge across defense lines. Colectivo Situaciones, a collective based in Buenos Aires, uses this expression to refer to the phenomenology of research militancy, a form of thinking and doing politics from and for concrete life, putting the body right where potencia is struggling to become counterpower.

Militant researchers read the struggles from the experience of each group and movement. This form of militant inquiry is anti-pedagogical. It does not “descend” to the movements to teach anything, because it assumes that the knowledge of resistance
already exists in situation and that situations think by themselves. This form of activism and research both affects and lets itself be affected by the struggles it inhabits.

The apprenticeship of Colectivo Situaciones has been a vast and intense process at the basis of which is an ongoing reflection of the legacy of radical struggles in Argentina and Latin America. Several inspirational sources could be cited: Spinoza, Marx, and Sartre; Foucault, Deleuze, and the Italian autonomists; José Carlos Mariátegui, Che Guevara and the Zapatistas, Rancière and Badiou, Antonio Gramsci and John Holloway, and Argentinean essay writers such as Silvio Frondizi, John William Cooke, and Horacio González. But the most significant aspect of Colectivo Situaciones is the process of collective reflection in which they have been accompanied by some of the most creative expressions of Argentina’s new protagonism, including the Unemployed Workers’ Movement of Solano, the Peasants’ Movement of Santiago del Estero, H.I.J.O.S. (the organization of the children of the disappeared during the dictatorship), and a number of other groups.

The research militancy of Colectivo Situaciones is an investigation of the immanent power of situations, a situated look at potencia, which accompanies the resonance and compositions of these struggles, always asking questions, never assuming that there are definitive answers.

**Inhabiting the New Protagonism**

In the early 1990s, Argentina was a barren land, battered by a seemingly unstoppable rampage of privatization, deregulation, and free market fundamentalism. The traditional institutions where resistance could organize—trade and student unions, neighbourhood associations—were not only controlled by grassroots groups of the Peronist and Radical parties, but they were also operating under the same logic of representation. Party politics was the model of grassroots politics. The culture of consensus, mixed in many cases with its messy ancestor, clientelism, was hegemonic in unions and the student movement. In those years, the more traditional groups were still digesting the fall of Eastern European state socialism and the more pragmatic organizations built around the concept of national liberation were still unable to come to terms with the withering of Sandinista Nicaragua. Consensus and representation had
become the main ingredients in a recipe for depoliticization, confusion, and dispersion precisely when resistance to the neoliberal advance was most needed.95

This is the context in which a new type of student organization emerged that stood the classical form of party-centred university politics on its head. Where the party offered vanguardism, vertical hierarchy, and dogmatism, these groups carried out political projects on the basis of horizontal relations and non-authoritarian criteria. It was not conscious endorsement of a dogma that kept these groups together, but the intertwining of affects and a multiplicity of projects in which politics was hard to distinguish from everyday life. In Spinoza’s sense, this new generation of student groups was profoundly ethical. Their ongoing preoccupations were the reconstruction of collective bonds amidst an increasingly professionalized academic culture and the promotion of critical thinking in an environment in which the notion of thinking critically appeared to many to be a residue from the past.

A notable member of the new generation, El Mate began in 1992 as a group of students of social sciences of the University of Buenos Aires who shared with other groups preoccupations about internal democracy, but distinguished themselves from the others by their focus on radical social transformation beyond the university campus. They identified with the generation of revolutionaries of the 1970s who had been massacred by the last dictatorship and ostracized by politicians and the mass media, who accused them of being “terrorists” and “subversives.” The students of El Mate supported the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, had sympathies for Uruguay’s Tupamaros and, later, for the Zapatistas of Chiapas. As Zibechi points out, the group had two dimensions, one abstract and the other concrete. On the one hand, they regarded themselves as inheritors of the revolutionary generation of their parents (in fact, several members of El Mate were children or relatives of the disappeared), whose conception of politics had found inspiration in the Cuban revolution and Che Guevara. On the other, they organized themselves without hierarchies, without a centralized leadership or representatives, refusing to freeze their organization in a particular identity (Zibechi, Genealogía 94).

The breakthrough of El Mate came in 1997, when the group conceived and organized the Cátedra Libre Che Guevara (Che Guevara Free Lectureship), a widely influential social and academic experiment that spread like a wildfire across Argentina’s
campuses. Organized as a series of lectures and debates on the figure of Che conducted by former members of armed organizations, the initial purpose of the Cátedra Che Guevara was to solve internal discussions on how to bring the academic community beyond the intellectual and political stagnation that reigned supreme in those years of furious neoliberalism and how to think the figure of Che in such way that the revolutionary experience he inspired could be analyzed critically, while maintaining a fidelity to the commitment to social transformation he invoked. After the success of the first year of the experiment (over two thousand people participated in Buenos Aires city alone), it was brought to the neighbourhoods, where it became intertwined with the numerous grassroots groups that had been for some time exploring non-hierarchical forms of organization. The goal of the Cátedra Che in the neighbourhoods shifted to experimentations with forms of collective production of knowledge. The patience for the traditional pedagogies of political parties and academics had run out and the topics being discussed had become secondary in relation to the pressure coming from below to address the collective desire to think together, which, as Zibechi suggests, was “closer to the Zapatista idea that ‘between all of us we know everything’ than to the supposed synthesis of which the institution (party or university) is carrier and with which it expects to enlighten those who up to that moment were in the darkness” (96).

Two years later, El Mate had become an intense space of experimentation, part of a diffuse network that included H.I.J.O.S., Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, grassroots piquetero organizations, women’s groups, and popular music bands. The Guevarist group had been flooded by the vast social and cultural movement brewing mostly among the youth. This liberating flood, as Zibechi points out, was not grounded in a particular ideology. Nobody planned for this to happen in advance. In a certain way, it was “a flood anchored in the body that also manifested itself in consciousness” (Genealogia 97). A profound transformation of sociability was underway, one in which the ways of relating bodies to one another was producing affective collective bonds as an alternative to the fragmentation of the social body produced by neoliberalism. The rebellion coming from below had the body as its epicentre. It was a rebellion of bodies that had been nurtured more by learning how to resist the police at rock and roll concerts and soccer stadiums than by carefully elaborated party programmes and disciplined union meetings.
The antihierarchical culture of the grassroots movements with which it came into contact created an internal crisis in El Mate. A new type of organization was needed. One in which "the bonds between those who are part of it are more important than the achievements" of the group (Zibechi, Genealogia 98). Instrumentality cannot coexist with the tolerance for disorder and uncertainty that appear when the priority are the bonds of affect that bring together the group as a community.

By this time (early 1999), El Mate participated in an encounter in Buenos Aires with groups from Bolivia, Perú, France and Belgium which shared the same concerns about how to keep their horizontal relations and non-instrumental practices, while maintaining the fidelity to radical social change of Che Guevara and other revolutionaries. Together they wrote the manifesto of the Network of Alternative Resistance (NAR).96 El Mate was at the time elaborating a form of intervention based on openness to multiplicity, innovative practices, and new types of bonds that could be carried beyond their student practice. The basic agreements of the manifesto were on resistance to identifying intervention with the need for a pedagogical figure and on a conception of politics that took the side of potentia. Such a politics would never become a politics of seizing power, but rather focuses on process, ongoing creation and becoming. Like Spinoza, the collectives members of the NAR denounced sadness as the worst poison, because it diminishes our capacity to act, depletes our potentia, and turns us into isolated, selfish individuals, solely concerned about our interests. Politics is potentia—and is, therefore, a remedy against sadness—if it consists in the creation of concrete bonds of solidarity.

By that time, a group of graduating students from El Mate who had developed an intense affective affinity began to work closely, discussing their experience and looking for a way to increase their commitment to the grassroots experiments to which they had become linked: H.I.J.O.S., unemployed workers groups, peasant organizations, and others. One of them, Diego Sztulwark, co-wrote a book with Miguel Benasayag, the facilitator of the Malgré Tout collective (one of the groups that signed the NAR manifesto), a fellow Argentinean, former member of the Guevarist guerrilla army PRT-ERP, living in Paris since his exile twenty years earlier.
A central concern discussed by Benasayag and Sztulwark in their book was to find a way in which an activism for and from the situations can maintain a fidelity to the struggles for freedom and justice of the past. The operation they undertook was two-fold. On one hand, the book draws attention to the betrayal by those who, repentent about their own militant past, claim to embrace a "realism" in tune with the times, in which capitalism seems impossible to overcome. The authors focus, on the other hand, on the dogmatism of those activists and intellectuals who insist on the old procedures and ideas as if they had not been worn out along with the situations for which they were originally conceived. Benasayag and Sztulwark argue that the fidelity to emancipatory struggles of the past can only be conceived within the exigencies imposed in the "here and now" that each situation defines. The new politics they were seeking to theorize was looking for answers in the multiplication of forms of struggle—from the Zapatistas and Brazil’s Landless Movement to the South African struggles against apartheid and the illegal immigrants in Western Europe—taking place at a moment when mainstream philosophers and thinkers were no longer interested in emancipation from capitalism and when most of the activists and intellectuals still committed to emancipation seemed to have forgotten how to think.

Benasayag and Sztulwark proposed the figure of "militant researcher" to define how the fidelity to the "spirit" of past revolutions and struggles could be understood today. It was, fundamentally, a wager on subjectivity, a commitment to the notion that human beings make history. The militant researcher embraces this concept under the condition that it is understood that history is not made by an abstract "humanity" in any of its forms (the masses, the working class, the multitude). Rather, this concept presupposes that everyone is responsible for the situations in which he or she dwells. "We are precisely the situations we inhabit, and in each situation men and women are summoned to assume a commitment, to be 'militants' on one side or the other" (Benasayag and Sztulwark 28). A commitment to the situation is subtractive because it no longer presupposes that emancipation is about constructing "machines of happiness," nor that it consists in changing "the world" by building models that order the lives of others. This does not mean that there is a linear evolution between becoming conscious of how our situations are and mobilizing our will to transform them. Rather, our will, our subjectivity
and our existence are defined by our situations, by the affects we are capable of within them. Like Gramsci, the authors affirmed that nobody can be removed from the common sense to which he or she belongs. But this common sense, this situation, is a point of departure, a "given" that both structures and challenges those who are within it.

Die-hard pedagogues might raise a question: how can a fidelity to emancipatory struggles that were universal in their scope be maintained by restricting commitment to the immediacy of concrete bonds and affects? The situation within which the militant researcher acts and thinks is founded on the principle of the concrete universal. It is a subtraction from the global vision of the world. It is not a small piece of the world that becomes loose. That construction would be local, but still abstract. It would still be constructed from the perspective of the objectifying eye of the spectator. Creation is situated, but does not for that reason cease to be universal. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, it works "in silence, locally, to seek consolidation everywhere, to go from the molecular to an uncertain cosmos" (A Thousand Plateaus 346). Destruction and police, on the other hand, operate from the universal but abstract perspective for which there is one single, spectacular, situation, the one that is progressively revealed by knowledge. They operate "in bulk, take center stage, occupy the entire cosmos in order to enslave the molecular and to stick it in a conservatory or a bomb" (346.).

Knowledge oriented by the identity of the local conceives the struggle for justice, for land, for freedom, within the available elements. The local is defined by—and saturated with—its own particularity. In this way, the local is either a fragment, articulated with others by a spectacular conception of the whole (for instance, multicultural concepts of hegemony), or an island, isolated from everything else (e.g. different kinds of sects, groups grounded in tradition). By contrast, in the situation, justice, freedom, thought, politics are concrete manifestations of what can universally be conceived as justice, freedom, thought, and politics. This is not because politics has the same essence in each situation as in its global, spectacular conception, but because each situation is a mode of affection of the same expressive totality. For a situation to assume a political character it needs to find its concrete universal. Situational politics is an ongoing investigation, to which militant researchers contribute without becoming guiding or central figures.
The consensual democracies of the twenty-first century are societies of "organized sadness," Benasayag and Sztulwark argue. This sadness involves our separation from our power to act to the point that we have become accomplices "of a system that starves, kills, exploits, represses, and condemns to the hardest survival millions and millions, while others are kept 'in the tenterhooks' (Benasayag and Sztulwark 36). Sadness is used in the same sense Spinoza gives to the expression: maximum reduction of our capacity to act, i.e. of our potentia, because potentia is always actual, identical with the action within which it exists. In a state of sadness there is no need of a tyrant's military might in order to keep tyranny in good shape. There is generalized sadness in the virtualization of life that turns us into spectators and reduces critical politics to spectacular critiques of the spectacle, which, at best, manage to make tyranny more transparent, sometimes succeeding in convincing almost everyone about how impotent we are before injustice. Yet, sadness refers not to the content of the spectacle. The creation of consensus requires making spectacles ever more entertaining. An important effort is invested in the aesthetic qualities of the performances of politicians and political groups. Rather, sadness is the effect of spectatorship itself, the reduction of our power to act to its minimum, and thus the shrinking of potentia to its minimum.

The political question of our times, Benasayag and Sztulwark argue, is how to abandon the state of impotentia. If potentia is what exists between our desire to do something and actually doing it, resistance today can no longer be conceived as formulating the right theory, the correct plan of action: "not because we say something that is heartily felt do we instantaneously attain a moment of practical realization" (41). The problem is not to be honestly convinced that the world needs to be changed, nor is it to have the right answer to the question "what is to be done." The militant researcher seeks to respond to these forms of pedagogicizing consciousness with practical acts. The researcher does this not by adopting the anti-intellectual stance activism sometimes takes, as a practice in lieu of theory, but embracing militancy as a praxis that intimately relates practice and thought, a true politics of the situation on the side of potentia and desire.

The commitment of the militant researcher is strictly immanent to the situation. Her working hypotheses derive from situational exigencies. It is precisely here, in the commitment to the situation, Benasayag and Sztulwark argue, that the greatest fidelity to
Che Guevara and other revolutionaries of earlier generations is achieved. For Che, guerrilla warfare was not a model to be applied anywhere or at any time. It was a form of politics effective in the situation, distinguishable from the virtualized forms of spectacular protest. To continue Che’s legacy today is not to adhere to a logic of confrontation, “but to give impulse to a myriad of struggles—‘two, three, a thousand Vietnams’—in all the terrains (situations), articulating all the possible ways (according to the ‘moments’), toward the construction of counterpower” (219). For Che, nobody was a revolutionary for life. One is revolutionary only by making a revolution: there is no freedom and justice outside the actual struggle for freedom and justice. Communism for Che was not a state achieved at the end of the road. Rather, communism is in the values that result from the struggle for freedom and justice here and now. It appears as an exigency of the situation that can only be assumed by being on the side of potencia.

Shortly after Política y Situación was published, Sztulwark and a small group of friends from El Mate began to publish the notebooks they called Situaciones, featuring material that resulted from their militant investigations. The group later became known as Colectivo Situaciones.

**When Political Activists No Longer Think and Thinkers Are No Longer Politically Active**

Is research militancy an activity in which militants do research? Or is it an investigation in which researchers assume a political commitment? The juxtaposition of “militancy” and “research” has, in Colectivo Situaciones, two edges. The expression, and the practice it designates, was born in circumstances when those upon whom society bestows the role as thinkers and creators were no longer interested in emancipation, while those who still practice politics, with the emancipation from capitalism in their horizon, no longer seem to think. The former have become trapped in a highly professionalized, instrumentalized, and bureaucratized existence as scholars, produced by and producers of institutions that increasingly separate themselves from the thought of those committed to struggles. The latter keep preaching the same models of revolution apparently unaware that the old pedagogy of consciousness only succeeds in isolating them further. Research militancy is not presented as a solution, a third term between the failure of activists to think and of academics to act politically. Rather, it is a position from where questions are
raised about what it is to think, what is politics, and how they relate. Colectivo Situaciones does not distinguish between thinking in situation and the politics of the situation. In the situation, politics is thought, and vice-versa.

Since the time when they were involved in El Mate, Colectivo Situaciones has found the state of academic research problematic. The generation of their parents had fought, even with weapons in hand, to open universities to new ideas and practices amidst the two most violent dictatorships Argentina had seen. Theirs had been a time of experimentation, both practical and philosophical, in which mistakes outnumbered wise decisions. After years of repression, public universities were again being run democratically, but at the price of careerism, professionalization, and bureaucratization. Most of the few who had managed to carve for themselves a space for thought in the interstices of bureaucracy had abandoned any hope of emancipation.

In their first book, Colectivo Situaciones argued that the dispositifs of academic research—the need to comply with certain rules, the funding mechanisms, the mentoring systems, language requirements, and the empty conferences where spontaneity is frozen by etiquette—separate the researcher from the meaning of his or her activity (Colectivo Situaciones, “Por una politica” 39). This is not a nostalgic assessment of the decline of moral values at the university, a longing for an era when the organization of academic research would make room for the type of research needed by the masses. Nor is it a demand for improvements or inclusion. Rather, what drives research militants to create a space of autonomy, subtracted from the tentacles of institutional bureaucracy, is something else. Academic research validates itself by being external to the situation it investigates. The extrinsic relation to the situation is a mechanism of objectification—a dispositif that produces objects. It requires the construction of a standpoint that is independent with respect to the action to which it directs its observations. Because traditional academic theorization needs to validate itself by defining an object, a method, and a set of conclusions, it is itself the very producer of the object it studies. The object does not pre-exist research but is constituted by it. By being exterior to the situation it does research on, the academic researcher cannot help “attributing intentions to the subjects of the actions” it studies (Hipotesis 11).
The researcher builds around him or herself an attributive machine, a mechanism to produce knowledges about actions and actors. This machine processes the questions the object raises by using the resources available in the research situation "to give meanings, values, interests, filiations, causes, influences, rationalities, intentions and unconscious motives to the object" (Colectivo Situaciones, "Por una politica" 11). Moreover, there is no need for the researcher to investigate herself—that is, to examine the judging machine she builds, the values it relies on, the gaze she casts upon the object. The synthesis of experience that results from her observation is spared by the judging machine, perhaps not in terms of the content its interpretative activity produces (having opinions on others' opinions is a well established academic practice), but in terms of how it works: as a machine for producing judgements.

Insofar as it is "militant," research militancy evokes a commitment to politics. Because of their militancy, extrasituational political activists might consider themselves positioned from a commitment to justice that defines a higher moral standard. This, however, does not make their approach less objectifying than academic research. Their standpoint is always already constituted by a certain strategy that forecloses the meaning of the knowledges from where they judge the "subjects" they work with. Activists are just as objectifying as academic researchers, Colectivo Situaciones argue, because what leads them to establish a relation with groups and movements is a strategy external to the group. The strategy defines an end; the relation to the group is a means to that end. Because relations to grassroots groups are always "tactical," there is never the experience of an encounter: a relation in which both sides open up in order to explore their affinities little by little, thinking also through the affects that arise, asking questions in order to learn rather than in order to confirm their theses. The extrasituational militant always enters the situation knowing how he or she stands in relation to the overall strategy. For example, a political activist who regards the working class as a natural subject who approaches a non-labour situation will seek to make sense of it in "class" terms, bringing into play the resources for a metapolitical reading of interests.

"Humanitarian" activists, Colectivo Situaciones argue, are no less external. This kind of activism does not have a strategy to change the world (Hipótesis 13). Rather, it sees the world as unchangeable. For example, poverty is typically viewed as an irrational
outcome of a system that for the most part runs smoothly, in which “problems” can be overcome with diligent efforts of good-willed people. Objectification, in this case, is the consequence of the production of those it seeks to help as victims whose human rights are in need of attention. The victims can never become subjects (Badiou, *Ethics* 10-16). They can only aspire to be included within the limited possibilities offered by a system that seems almost unchangeable, only susceptible to the lesser adjustments that the regime of consensual democracy allows.

**The Research of *Potentia***

Research militancy, as Colectivo Situaciones conceives it, is research without an object. From a radical immanence to the situation, militant researchers launch investigations that focus more on raising questions than on producing answers. The investigation concentrates on the elements of a new sociability, the phenomenology of the micropowers and molecular relations that produce both the researchers and the *experiencias* they work with, and in whose production they all participate. There is not a subject-object distinction when research revolves around investigating problems and researching the very disposition to investigate (Colectivo Situaciones, “Algo más” 107). But research militancy is not a new form of narcissism, in which intellectuals produce meta-theories on themselves. This would, indeed, define a clear object.

Immanence is defined by a fidelity to the *potentia* of the situation. *Potentia* manifests itself as an intensity, a modulation of affects in the here and now of the situation. The investigation of *potentia* is paradoxical in the sense that what is done research about does not constitute an object because there is not an extrasituational finality, an outcome expected outside that “here and now.” Research militancy is not research that is carried out by committed intellectuals, but a stance where political commitment and research become indistinguishable. Far from both enlightened pedagogues and activists for a just society that would emerge triumphant at the end of history, militant researchers are driven by “the working hypotheses [that] derive from the exigencies of the situation” (Benasayag and Sztulwark 126).

When it comes to *potentia* two mutually excluding possibilities appear: either one takes the side of *potentia* (of capacities in the situation, which always reveal a number of possibilities of what can be done) or adopts the standpoint of power (the spectacular,
administrative view that Rancière calls police to distinguish it from politics). Taking the side of potentia, the militant thinks from the concrete and toward the concrete, bringing about the necessary experiential ignorance to initiate an encounter with the multiplicity of concrete relations.

The order of encounters is, for Spinoza, the dimension—always local, partial, and limited in time—in which bodies encounter. At this very basic level of the encounter one knows if the encounter is good because its result is the expansion of potentiae that results from composition (Deleuze, Expressionism 235-54). The connection is not a communication of intellects. The problem is not, in any way, the communication of good ideas, but rather the coming together of joyful affects, where joy should not be understood in a hedonistic sense, but in the materialist sense of politicization; that is, as an expansion of the power to act.

Nor is the encounter an agreement or an alliance (even a tactical one). As Colectivo Situaciones points out, research militancy initiates, unreservedly, a bond that resembles love or friendship. It is the result of the encounter between two different kinds of experiencias, the research militants and those they do research with. Love and friendship are categories that should be understood in strict materialist terms. In the experience of genuine love the bond is not objective (subject to object), instrumental, or contractual: “nobody experiences love or friendship innocently: we emerge reconstituted from them” (Hipótesis 16). The boundaries of the private individual are blurred and a larger composition appears. Composition is beyond the linguistic level. It is always more “than anything that can be said about it” and it is “more intense than any commitment that is merely political or ideological” (16). It is a relation that can only be understood in qualitative terms. Antipedagogical composition is constructed immanence. In this sense, it is also different from the imputed immanence of immaterial labour.

The blurring of boundaries speaks of the immanent character of the relation. For the militant researcher, immanence is not comparable to becoming an insider of the group (the experiencia) he or she does research with. Nor is it “belonging” to the group, becoming part of it, as was, for instance, the case with activists that left academia to become workers in the 1960s and 1970s (Caparrós and Anguita). Immanence removes the
militant researcher from the inside/outside question because it challenges the mechanisms that produce subjectivity in terms of already coded representations of outside and inside.

Immanence, like love and friendship, requires an ongoing construction of the relation, because if it is to rely on codes defined once and for all, it dies the same way love dies when it is confused with the paperwork of civil matrimony. The contrast between immanence and the demand for explicit boundaries that are part of the police practice of so-called “research ethics committees” in academia is perhaps all too obvious. To inhabit the situation means that the operation set in motion by research militancy needs a sustained effort on all parts to produce new values and meanings because its practice is in competition with the values and meanings that constitute the subjective basis of capitalism.

The journey of research militancy is the same as the one charted by those producing situations on the basis of subtraction, that is, through the creation of a specific time and space, a horizon of meaning autonomous from the spectacular time and space of the state and the market. Militant researchers produce and inhabit the space and time that give meaning to their research. From there, they relate to other situations also involved in the creation of a new sociability.

The critique of values is an essential component of the research militancy of Colectivo Situaciones because it is part of the critique the collective carries out on itself. This critique is not contemplative but practical: it is directed toward values, ways of doing, logics. It seeks to deconstruct values and forms of perception, which is where the most subtle forms of a dominant worldview remain active. It is a self-critical activity that opens up the militant researchers’ ideas and readings to an ongoing questioning that Colectivo Situaciones deems fundamental to avoid the idealizations that result when this criticism is not in place. Both academic research and traditional forms of radical activism produce idealizations by leaving their mechanisms of attribution outside the scope of their critical activity. Idealization involves a process of abstraction. It produces images of coherence that inevitably reduce reality, amputating from life its complexity, contradictoriness, and lack of a justifying rationale: “the living—as long as it persists in its capacities and powers (potencias)—does not need to adjust to any image that gives meaning and justifies it” (Hipótesis 14).
Composition: Beyond Communication

The books and articles by Colectivo Situaciones make reference to workshops and discussions they have conducted with different social movements, both in Argentina and abroad, as part of the forms of engagement of research militancy. However, none of those materials reveals much about the methods used in the encounters. The reader can find in those pages essays by the collective and, sometimes, by the experiencias they work with and other authors. There are also transcriptions of conversations and more or less descriptive introductions of an experiencia. There are, as well, occasional essays in which the collective analyzes its own subjective involvement in the activity of research militancy. But, these essays are written in a phenomenological register, seeking to explore how the practice of inhabiting a situation as militant researchers feels. What the reader will never find are descriptions of the procedures they use. The “how to” of militant research is not documented and the collective has resisted the request of some of their closest friends to talk about the matter (Colectivo Situaciones, “Something More”).

This cannot be explained as an arrogant protection of a trade secret or as unwillingness to share findings that would make the techniques available to others who would like to replicate research militancy as a new form of political action, as if the collective in its present configuration was the result of a progression from an initial plan. Rather, the reason for this absence is a form of fidelity to the experiential nature of research militancy. Research militancy, like any other experience, cannot be communicated. Or better, its communication always amounts to an idealization, a reduction of reality of the actual practices. Things can be said about those practices, but discourse cannot convey what actually happens in them; it cannot account for the intensities and affects that are put in motion. Colectivo Situaciones’ antipedagogy resists the maxim of our era that “everything is out there to be communicated, and everything is justifiable by its communicable usefulness.” To take the side of potentia, to work in immanence, requires to give value “not to thoughts, but to the power to think; not to the circumstances, but to the possibility of experience; not to this or that concept, but to experiences by which such notions acquire power (potencia); not to identities but to a different becoming.” Being on the side of the actual, of potentia, Colectivo Situaciones are more interested in “that which is lost in ‘communication’” than in “that which is
communicable”, the realm of virtualization that posits the interlocutor as spectator ("Something More").

The obvious question, “how is it that you do not believe in communicating and publishing texts?” has been posed to Colectivo Situaciones ("Something More"). As a matter of fact, not only do they have many publications, in Spanish and in other languages, but they also run a printing press that publishes about five new titles every year. Their answer is that they do not publish in order to communicate, but in order to look for resonances and to extend experimentation. As we have seen in previous chapters, resonance is an expressive concept that is in the antipodes of communication. Resonance focuses on tuning up the activity between two or more points regardless of whether a message is transmitted or not. One situation resonates with another because the common problematic of an era underlies them both. The same void makes itself present in them. If in each of these situations there is a search for responses to the common problematic, an elaboration of thought from practices, then a text will be read as living thought, not as an exercise in consciousness raising, a passage of information or a contribution to encyclopedic knowledge. Only from an effort of thought that lives in practices is it possible to put texts to work politically. This effort escapes the communicability taken for granted by traditional militants to the point that Colectivo Situaciones considers publishing closer to the experience of establishing clandestine links. The name of the press run by Colectivo Situaciones, Tinta Limón (Lemon Ink), seeks to convey that meaning. It makes reference to messages written in an ink that requires a labour of making visible which takes place amidst the creation of new languages for new practices. Although its materials are also sold in commercial bookstores, Tinta Limón relies fundamentally on activists for its production and distribution tasks. This is another way of subtracting the collective from the academic horizon and its theoricism.

Words do have a value attached to them when communication takes place on a soil of composition. In that case, words are no longer a truthful representation of reality or a vehicle for a content that passes from one consciousness to another. Rather, words enter in situated compositions with practices in the production of collective thought and the formation of a collective bond that defines a new consistency, which is neither imposed
from outside (the way the state produces consistency) nor formed around a centre that thinks on behalf of the rest.

The production of community amidst the neoliberal shattering of the common ground that made possible earlier forms of resistance is the main ongoing research question of Colectivo Situaciones and the experiencias they work with. This requires a permanent awareness of the dangers of idealization that would impose a model of how things should be, putting the virtuality of ideals ahead of the actual multiplicity of potentia. Composition—immanence to the experiencias—is the only form of involvement that allows militant researchers to tune up with the forms of perceptions that unfold in the production of a new sociability. Working in situation, the collective is plastic like a piece of putty, with its “capacity to receive affections without opposing resistances, in order to understand the real play of powers (potencias)” (“Something More” 608). The production of a common plane of understanding—a fabric of affects and ideas that is essential for collective thinking—takes place between militant researchers and experiencias that, affinities notwithstanding, are heterogeneous in relation to each other. Instead of artificially erasing differences (which would be the case, for instance, if research militants constructed their own story in such way that they too would be members of the “working class”) or postponing their consideration, Colectivo Situaciones understands that summoning those differences in relation to the common problems they face is fundamental for the construction of immanence.

Research militancy is not a practice of radical intellectuals reaching out to social movements to advise them on political issues or to help them make the leap from grassroots efforts considered to be politically irrelevant (by the traditional Left) to “serious” politics. Radical activists with academic training sometimes understand this practice as one that consists in disseminating “key works” and making those involved in social struggles familiar with the latest radical jargon. All these efforts presuppose a separation from practices of resistance that would not lead to an encounter with the traces of an emergent sociality, the molecular, microphysical form of alternative bonds. The point is not to give the forms of life created in resistance a political direction, as if this lack constituted the birthmark of life; nor is it to load life with tasks that transcend the situation where it unfolds, displacing it by subjecting it to different kinds of external
demands. Rather, the quest that brings together militant researchers and the *experiencias* is to find a politics that can match the exigencies of life itself.

In the construction of a common plane between research militants and an *experiencia* there is no room for the clearly defined boundaries of practices of dissemination and their spatial criteria of “inside” and “outside” (whether “intellectuals” become insiders to the group they work with or whether they remain outside). The formation of the common plane does not summon the pedagogical method of explication. Its formation is the result of a patient labour of composition, which is confirmed in what Colectivo Situaciones calls the experience of falling in love between those involved. The workshops jointly organized by militant researchers and members of an *experiencia* are the terrain where the explorations toward the construction of this common plane take place. But the workshops lay no claim to centrality: “the workshops neither are (nor aspire to be) the General Staff of the situation” (“Something More” 613). The search for common notions unfolds around an elaboration of practical hypotheses in which intervention and the expansion of capacities for composition are the shared horizon. In the situation, Colectivo Situaciones argues, “intelligence springs up neither from erudition nor from pure quickness of mind, but rather from the capacity for *involvement*” (614). It is its contribution to the production of a consistent fabric of affects—a disposition toward the formation of new bonds—that decides the efficacy of research militancy.

The common plane is not a space of “understanding,” where a dialogue between those who “know” things and those in need of knowledge that would inform their practices. Much less is it an encounter that facilitates the passage of information between those who have problems and those who have solutions. Rather, what is established is a *commonality of ignorance*. Composition requires, first, a shared suspension of *a priori* judgements, ideologies, and classifications and, second, a reunion of wills, not in order to “find solutions” but to ask questions together, a virtuous circle of power (*potentia*) and thought. It is not the coming together of experts and the uninstructed, of two different levels of consciousness or of theory and practice but, rather, a powerful encounter of ignorance, will and desire.
Exodus from Academia

Colectivo Situaciones practices research militancy as an effort to generate, among autonomous grassroots struggles, a capacity to understand themselves. They look for traces of an emerging new sociability, producing and corroborating practical and theoretical hypothesis on emancipation while working alongside experiencias that are committed to the production of bonds outside the logic of representation ("Por una política" 39). The practices of resistance of the new protagonism, of which the collective itself is an example, have produced novel articulations of practices and concepts, new combinations of bodies and ideas, of thinking and doing, depositing "the separation of corporeal sensibility and the pure idea," making knowledges immediately available and experience possible (Colectivo Situaciones, "Paradojas").

In the El Mate experience Colectivo Situaciones had already tested the political limits of academic research. However, they came to regard those limits as serious obstacles when their involvement in research militancy put them in closer contact with the antipedagogical dispositions and capacities that had developed among various experiencias of resistance. Research militancy could only be practiced by an autonomous collective capable of suspending the regulated space of academia and subtracting research from the alienating procedures of academic work. The capacity for composition requires that those involved in research "let themselves be modified by relations, affects, and desires" (Colectivo Situaciones, Maestro Ignorante 22). Nothing can be written in stone for research militancy. The system of academic roles, presuppositions, hierarchies, rewards, and punishments is incompatible with the ignorance that makes composition possible; an ignorance needed to investigate the novelty of the subjective transformations caused by the affects that flow in all directions within the experiencias with which research militants form compositions.

The autonomy of the collective has produced an inhabitable situation that delinks itself not just from the physical spaces of the academic institution, but also from the academic experience of time, from its images of utility and success, from the individualist figures of academic subjectivity, from the scientistic assumption of value neutrality, and from the corruption of ethical commitment by current discourses on excellence, relevance, and professionalism, all in serious conflict with—when not in direct opposition
to—the new forms of sociability advanced by the experiments of counterpower they join in research. While the conditions of competition for positions, the external determinations on maintaining a reputation, and the labour market conditionings to develop an integrity as authors require scholars to construct their identities as persons of knowledge, militant research “demands a big effort to find oneself modified, for destroying one’s assumptions, to produce once and again the conditions for an experience in common” (Colectivo Situaciones, Maestro Ignorante 17). Changing oneself, altering the forms of relations and remaining ignorant about the potentia a new relation might offer are all crucial to maintain the constituent power of research, its capacity for creation and composition. Neither institutions nor traditional forms of politics (parties, unions) offer this possibility. Instead, they package practices in forms that capture their multiplicity and sadden their potentiae.

Research militancy coincides with Foucault’s genealogical project in that it seeks to unite “erudite knowledge and local memories … to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today” (Power/Knowledge 83). This is why a wholesale antiintellectual discredit of academic research, which, in some cases, produces useful descriptions, is not at issue. Rather, the point is to combine fragments of academic knowledge, the instances still not one-dimensionalized by technoscientific discourse, market determinations and consensual democracy, with the—mostly hidden—knowledges of resistance of the dominated, on the condition that the former enter the militant research situation in an ignorant mode, as a knowledge that enables the formulation of questions.

Separated from academia, Colectivo Situaciones has been reluctant to construct an “alternative” institution, a self-managed space that might reterritorialize research militancy. Instead, they have adopted a nomadic configuration, working with different experiencias, sometimes putting together books or articles, many other times just practicing their research in silence. A self-marginalization that recognizes that politics is not to be found at the centre, for it is neither in the search for a new consensus nor an alternative form of state, but in the margins. Far from seeking to put the margins at the centre—as has been the case with much of “identity politics”—self-marginalization is the recognition that “power (potencia) is in the multiple” and that an option for the margins
amounts to renouncing "to desire the objects of power," and to the affirmation of alternative images of happiness (Colectivo Situaciones, MOCASE).

Colectivo Situaciones's self-marginalization from the institutions is a nomadic investment, in the sense Deleuze and Guattari give to this expression: "The revolutionary knows that escape is revolutionary ... provided one sweeps away the social cover on leaving, or causes a piece of the system to get lost in the shuffle" (Anti-Oedipus 277). A nomadic thought and practice whose lines of flight are always seeking to challenge the established dispositions of words, things, and bodies, is revolutionary not only in its content but also—fundamentally—because it explores forms that escape containment. Colectivo Situaciones belongs, in this sense, to the great tradition of twentieth century intellectual collectives that have been associated with movements of rupture in politics, arts, and science, challenging established schools and also the means of expression through which the new is to be said.

The collective is a form that comes closer to making effective the death of the author, that "privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences" that Foucault talked about ("What Is an Author?" 101). The form sometimes maintains the notion of collectivity: Collectif Malgré Tout (Paris), Precarias a la Deriva (Madrid), Universidad Trashumante (Argentina). Other times, the figure of the individual author is contested by adopting an individual nom du plume, invented (Karen Eliot) or actually existing (Luther Bisset). In other cases, collectives take names that are purposively deceiving, like the Italian group that calls itself Wu Ming. For a nomadic collective, adopting a name is a risky operation. It concedes to the moment of writing the opportunity to build a homely space, a terrain of reassurance of the collective self that could put closure to the multiple becomings of affect between the members.

Nomadic collectives do not just pick up names. Theirs have to be names that have some built-in ability, perhaps some sedimentation of references, that allows them to escape the constraints of identity—their job is to name non-identity. Situaciones took its a name from the Sartrean tradition, which the collective evokes to conjure both postmodern nihilism—the resigned acceptance that nothing can be done—and modern totalization—the desire to become majority, to become state. They identify themselves with a totality.
that both dissolves totalization and carves a passage through the nothingness of present times: "we refuse being categorized with anything other than the multiplicity of struggles, creation, and art" (Colectivo Situaciones, *Genocida en el Barrio*). Their nomadism places them critically between the affirmation of multiple being and the dissolution of identity: “we are comically stuck between ‘being’ and ‘nothingness’” (Genocida en el Barrio). The multiplicity of the nomad has nothing to do with postmodern fragmentation and celebration of difference for its own sake (or with struggles for “the right to be different”), in which difference is resolved as an affirmation of a distinct identity. Nomads are not interested in making policy recommendations. Nor do they have anything to do with the themes of liberal pluralism: tolerance for difference or the search for a better position for the excluded within the world of spectacular representation. The nomad feels driven through a journey across different situations by differences that reveal the existence of the same: an asymmetry that is not relativism but the affirmation of a concrete universal, the assumption that the whole exists in the part—and only in the part—and that the situation, considered in the present (in the ‘here and now’ of action), is loaded with infinite possibilities. The wager on concrete situations is at the same time a renunciation of the project to change the world as an imaginary, virtual, trans-situational totality.

As good nomads, Colectivo Situaciones go nowhere specifically. For them history is not a master-plan whose keys they have to find and act upon. For the nomads there is no freedom and justice as values to which they can adjust, but rather the latter are incarnated in each act of liberation, in any situation that rises to confirm its equality. There is no promise of a bright future at the end of the struggle. For the nomad the destination is never as interesting as the road itself. The possibilities of acting in the situation are grounded in neither hope nor utopia. There is no predetermined image of justice that justifies the action, but rather a fidelity to the struggles for liberty and equality here and now.

Colectivo Situaciones seeks to maintain its nomadism alive by questioning the unity and finished status of their projects, sometimes using irreverent gestures that resemble dadaism, as, for instance, in *Hipótesis 891*, a book that contains transcriptions of conversations in the “workshops of thought” co-organized by the collective and the
unemployed workers' movement of Solano, along with pieces written by each group and a speech delivered by John Holloway in the slum where the unemployed workers are based. The acknowledgment that the book is nothing more than a series of hypotheses honours the incomplete, ongoing character of the experiment of radical thought produced in collaboration. One needs to read the foreword to learn that the intriguing number 891 only makes reference to the street address where the workshop took place: “the number that indicates the site of production of that thought that, as such, resists all labeling and has functioned as shelter from the exposure to the elements of dogmatism, academicism, and ‘finished recipes’” (Colectivo Situaciones, Hipótesis 8).

Being their own publishers has allowed Colectivo Situaciones to keep experimentation with forms alive. The limit of the dissolution of the author are the regulatory bodies of the state specialized in the publishing industry, which still require that each specimen of the form “book” be associated with an author. The collective thus warns the readers that the author function will be used there only to fulfill the government’s requirements and that their “intention as ‘authors’ is not what counts” (Hipótesis 10). The book should be valued not because of what is said by whoever says it, but by what results from the specific forces that combine with it. When referring to a militant collective, the attempt to rescue the functioning of the author with its individuating aspects is problematic. Inquiring about the proper names of the members of the collective, who have chosen to privilege the composition they form over their individualities, is questionable. Above all, the fidelity to immanence—to the potentia that only exists in the act—that characterizes research militancy finds suspicious any transformation of the living being of the collective into a figure whose name speaks for itself. For a collective that does not play the game of representation, avoiding virtualization is a fundamental form of resistance.

**Research Militancy and Counterpower**

The research militancy of Colectivo Situaciones is not a research method in the sense that participatory action research, institutional ethnography, and other forms of grassroots inquiry are, that is, a method that can be coordinated with different politics (e.g. organized around gender, environmental issues, etc.). Rather, it is a reconsideration of basic political questions: What is politics? What is thinking? How are they related?
And, mobilized by these questions, it takes a position in which politics and thinking are interchangeable concepts. When politics is understood as a practice that has to do with taking or keeping power, it has nothing to do with thinking. The politics that seeks to seize established positions of power uses thought, instrumentalizes it, but does not think. This conception of politics leads to a separation between those who think politics—the “intellectuals,” the Party, and other pedagogical figures—and those who practice politics—the masses, the working class, or another segment of a population conceived as the central subject of politics. Thought, in this sense, is transcendental in relation to practices. However, politics and thought can be seen as practices of the same order—equal in nature, as Spinoza and Deleuze would say—if they are in the “concrete and collective practices of life,” inhabiting “the very interior of popular struggles and experiencias—as potentialities” (Colectivo Situaciones, MOCASE).

Colectivo Situaciones would agree with Deleuze and Guattari in that to be radical and escape the reterritorializing effects of the capitalist machine and the despotic state, politics has to operate at the molecular level, the microcosm where the investment of the social field begins. Politics and thought take place in the microphysical dimension in which bonds between people are constituted: flows of affect and desire, values and practices that affirm or resist the production and day-to-day reproduction of the state and the market in each of us. At this concrete level, thought and resistance come together in the production of a new sociability, in the creation of affective bonds where poverty, the precariousness of life in free market capitalism, and/or repression have shattered them, in the creation of alternatives to wage labour and money-based relations between producers, in the experimentation with forms of organization without hierarchies or permanent representatives.

Like Badiou and Rancière, Colectivo Situaciones see politics both as a discontinuity and as an event. Politics requires a disruption of the way things are, which is neither necessarily nor primarily violent and always involves the creation of new bonds. Politics begins with a subtraction from common sense, which includes knowledge: “to think politically is to subtract oneself, to step aside of what the established knowledge decrees” (MOCASE). In the situation, modes of being superior to those of capitalism can be experienced in action. The situation is where the dispute over values and meanings,
over individualism, instrumentalism, and communication is contested through the
production of alternative compositions of affects, in new combinations of thought,
politics, and desire. The situation becomes such a standpoint only when it can become a
local and sovereign suspension of the time and space. It has to suspend, at its local level
the abstract, virtual, spectacular view of representation and the market, produced by the
state, capital, and the mass media. However, the suspension of the urgencies and fears
determined by the media, the labour market, and the national or international political
conjunctures is not aimed at isolating the situation. Even when an *experiencia* such as an
unemployed workers movement in Argentina cuts itself out of these forces and
viewpoints, it continues to be penetrated by them. Rather, what the situation does as a
subtraction is to think the conjuncture through a gaze that plunges into multiplicity to
produce practices that, nonetheless, pursue their own ends, independently of the
conjuncture. Subtraction is an operation that reveals the actual infinity of the situation, the
universality contained in its singularity. To experience the infinity of their own actions
means, for a movement of the unemployed or the children of the disappeared, to show to
themselves and to everybody else that “there are always more options than those the
conjuncture offers as the only possible ones.” To think is precisely to “discover the
possibilities that exist in the concrete situation” (Colectivo Situaciones Hipótesis 162).

Politics ceases to be materialist when it is conceived as an independent reality
beyond the situation. The trans-situational imaginary of power thus conceived constructs
politics as a single central scene, even though its centrality is really the consequence of
the imaginary delegation of power by multiple situations which, once delegated, has real
effects. When not conceived from the situation, politics becomes an illusion insofar as the
site of representation from where the state operates negates the fact that its own
consistency—its being counted as One—is always produced as an expression of the
*potentiae* of multiple situations. The weakness of sovereign power is confirmed once and
again whenever those who occupy its offices confuse illusion with reality.

The thought and politics of situations is the vital form of existence of a
counterpower whose unfolding negates power as a trans-situational imaginary, but also
negates itself as consistent identity. Politics is negation insofar as “it negates in order not
to become falsity—to become an identity—but it also negates by attacking with its power
(potencia) the quietness of the context” (Colectivo Situaciones, “Paradojas de la Negación”). In this sense, negation opens to an affirmation, a constitution of new becomings. This is the resistent form of negation of different kinds of groups, of projects that, in their situation, question not just the hegemonic relations of power but also hegemony itself, as a political construct that requires articulation to a central point beyond the situation.102 Counterpower appears in a situation when the dominant common sense is irreversibly fractured and disestablished in the process of creation of new forms of life. The main tasks of projects of counterpower are creative—to develop new forms of sociability—and defensive—to protect what has been created from the attacks deployed against it by the state—the state’s own form of negation, which is always reactive. There is no symmetry between power and counterpower. While, from the side of the state, coercion is “offensive ... colonial, imperialist,” from the side of counterpower violence is a last resource option, always self-defensive, and never part of a strategy (Colectivo Situaciones, Hipótesis 162-65). Thus, counterpower neither produces itself as a mirror image of power—as was the case with the Argentinean guerrilla organizations of the 1970s—nor works toward carving spaces of inclusion within the state and its apparatuses.

Politics, as Colectivo Situaciones conceive it, has nothing to do with a counter-spectacle, a “good” global standpoint that would oppose the “bad” one. In their view, this would be another form of virtualizing life as it exists in the concrete situation. Capitalism is not a situation; it is distributed throughout infinite situations, in each of us, in the virtualization of the real and the commodification of social relations. Thus, a politics of situations takes the form of a protagonism assumed by the former spectators, who engage in multiple resistances to capitalism, giving rise to counterpowers as they produce alternative social relations in their concrete sphere of action. This way of passing from spectatorship to protagonism has been one of the keys to the success of the practice of generating justice that H.I.J.O.S., the Argentine organization of the children of the disappeared, calls escrache (I will define this term in a moment). In contrast to the failure of the politicians to send the torturers to jail by passing laws, this practice has been highly effective in creating local counterpowers that isolate former torturers from their neighbours.
The fabric of those new relations is woven out of situational exigencies: concrete demands to protect and expand life, freedom, and justice. In the situation it becomes clear that the foundation of justice cannot be the promise of a future to come. It no longer makes sense looking at “theory” to know what can be done (Colectivo Situaciones, Genocida en el Barrio 3). The resistance of counterpower is fundamentally creation: it is a process of “construction of social, personal, familial, and political bonds, in the end, [construction of] a subjectivity of struggle, community, and project” (Hipótesis 109).

In the logic of representation, the political is an autonomous sphere organized by urgencies that are always determined outside the situations. This political sphere of representation has its own separate temporality, a virtual set of urgencies and deadlines determined sometimes by electoral schedules and sometimes by staged protests of anticapitalists. Colectivo Situaciones has criticized the “antiglobalization movement,” the Porto Alegre Social Forum, and “global First World activism” because of their desire for an “‘alternative globalization’ … that functions at the same spectacular level as its contrary” (Colectivo Situaciones, “Oltre i picchetti). Militant research makes sense within a logic of expression that Colectivo Situaciones understands as the “unconscious and delocalized … process of production of values of a new sociability—a new common sense—by a multitude of experiencias that participate in the production of vital meanings without any type of conscious and voluntary coordination” (19 y 20 147).

**From Potencia to Counterpower**

While, on the one hand, the concept of situation defines a way of looking at the cartography of local resistances (their spatiality and temporality), on the other, it defines the concrete as the only terrain in which potentia is possible. “Power (potencia), Colectivo Situaciones argue, is the force of the concrete and the situation is its space-time” (Tupamaros). The collective follow Spinoza in his distinction of two dimensions of power: (in Spanish) potencia and poder. Thus, research militancy is an investigation that explores the multiple becomings that connect potentia to counterpower.

The state understands itself—and is conceived by those intending to seize it—as a central, pivotal point of every society. The standpoint of Colectivo Situaciones is not an anarchist conception that the state should be smashed. Rather, with Badiou, they believe that every situation generates its own state: “If the state is not the privileged place of
change, it is also neither a place that can simply be suppressed nor a reality that can be negated. It is, indeed, a place that tends to remain in every large and complex society and, before all else, it is at the same time a possible situational standpoint, from one side and the other, an element present in different kinds of situations” (19 y 20 159).

The state as *police*, as administration (*gestión*) and care is ontological; it is unavoidable. At any moment in history, the state crystallizes the defeats and achievements of political struggles. But the state ought not to be confused with politics, which is an always de-centred, infinite dynamic. On the one hand, a politics that ignores the state is nothing but an ultra-leftist wager on pure dynamism that is incapable of understanding that the state is part of the dynamic. On the other hand, a conception that confuses politics with the state is a totalitarian, representational view, unable to recognize that state power is always a function of the *potentia* of the rest of the situations. The socio-historical state is just one more situation and not the seat of politics.

Revolutionary politics takes place when compositions are formed that create new forms of life, self-affirmed singularities that strengthen their *potentia* by defending their multiplicity from a power that “strives to erase the traces of its real existence” by “abstracting, globalizing, generalizing” (*Tupamaros*). In contrast, resistance takes the form both of a struggle against unidimensionalization and fragmentation and of the production of bonds outside of those defined by the state and the market—the very incarnation of the forces that abstract, one-dimensionalize, and fragment. The efficacy of state power depends on the impotence of situations, since it represents a given state of composition or decomposition, *potentia* or impotence (*impotentia*). The relation is inherently assymetrical. The type of confrontation embraced by those who seek to take control of state power is symmetrical because it is based in the construction of an alternative state that looms in the shadows in the form of the Party (or front, or counterhegemony) until power is captured. In contrast, in the conception of counterpower embraced by Colectivo Situaciones no symmetry is possible, because what makes state power strong is what weakens the situations, and vice-versa. Counterpower advances by weakening the social bond upon which the state is built. This weakening happens as a result of an expansion of the *potentiae* of situations. Like in the months that followed the
December 2001 crisis in Argentina, the multiple forms of resistance of protagonists undermine the conditions for building a new representation. Their potentiae are based in multiplicity because they make the operation of counting that reinstates the One artificial and illegitimate.

As Michel Foucault argued, and many revolutionaries who succeeded in taking hold of the state painfully learned, there is not a central location from where power emanates. Power is in every situation because it is there where potentia is contested or expanded. It is not possible to be outside power because everyone, in their situation, contributes to produce it. Power, in this sense, is a certain arrangement, a particular configuration of what Deleuze and Guattari call a social machine: an articulation that microscopically regulates the life and death of desire, its investments, connections and disjunctions. Power is exercised through the numerous mechanisms that regulate the separation of potentia from each of us, a separation effected from within us by traditional disciplinary institutions, territorial deployments, and complex systems of norms. It can be found, for instance, in the enclosures produced by private property that force living labour to work for those who have accumulated dead labour and to enter contractual relations with others as individuals. These are very real effects of power that can only be confronted from concrete practices that expand potencia in each situation. That is, by practices that generate bonds and relations to counter decomposition in the concrete dimension of the situation. If power is exercised across every interstice of society, then power relations have to be subverted not by an attack on state administration, the centre that representational politics considers to be the privileged locus of power (that is, constructing an equal but symmetrically opposed centre), but by constructing new relations here and now, in all the situations (Benasayag and Sztulwark 87).

The question “where does resistance start?” makes sense only to those who conceive power as emanating from an omnipotent centre. In its physical, practical form, resistance never ceases to exist. But, it remains largely invisible, most of the time submerged in the form of a miriad of micro-resistances, isolated insubordinations, and knowledges buried in a space hidden to power. The moment of rebellion occurs when this “world of the oppressed emerges to public light, surprising all and sundry” (Colectivo Situaciones, “Por una política” 38). The codes of resistance of the dominated are
always there. Ignored and invisible, they compose an underworld whose visualization is an important component of the desire for rebellion.

But, do resistances become potentiae? How does negativity turn into affirmation? These questions cannot be answered other than by the thought and politics of the situations. Any other answer enters the terrain of the abstract. There are no trans-situational recipes to expand potentia. Each situation needs to find its own pace to expand its potentia and to construct its own sovereign counterpower. Otherwise, the lively relations that nurture potentia are destroyed (Benasayag and Sztulwark 111). In the passage from potentia to counterpower, one thing remains certain: the asymmetry is not dissolved. Counterpower never aspires to be power.

Still, when a counterpower emerges as a process of self-affirmation, the most difficult questions become how to maintain it, how to defend it. On the one hand, it depends on the capacity of counterpower to subtract itself from the capitalist norm; to produce its “own time, issues, resources, spaces, and initiatives.” On the other hand, it depends on the ability “to develop a network of counterpower capable of reproducing the movement” (Colectivo Situaciones, Hipótesis 168). Such a network can be more or less diffuse, linking points of resonance, of potentia, with mediations that are autonomous from the logic of capital.

Because of the asymmetry of its force with regard to the centrality of power in the logic of representation, counterpower cannot be embodied in a party or other suprasituational apparatus (Colectivo Situaciones “Por una política” 26-27). An intervention that takes the side of counterpower can only be a politics of situations, but, at the same time, it always has to look towards the creation and development of networks.

In the aftermath of the 2001 revolt in Argentina, it is possible to confirm that the formation of counterpower is of the order of the event, a moment that produces new truths while making older truths nonsensical. This process has been irreversible for everyone involved, not because the achievements of the event are eternal, but because they entail the de-institution of established values, notions, practices, relations, forms of affecting and being affected. While traditional politicians, even those on the right side of the spectrum, can no longer present as unquestionable the view that privatizations bring about
prosperity, activists from the left wing parties have come to accept some principles of autonomy and horizontal organization. 105

Power tends to accommodate to the rupture, to reinvent its forms of cooptation, its means of repression and control, its images of happiness and fulfillment; it tries to lure those seized by the forces unleashed by the rupture into the calm waters of “serious politics.” Power may or may not succeed in doing this. But, nothing remains exactly as it was before the event. Nobody is the same. A new sense of legitimacy has opened. Dignity has acquired different meanings. Professional politicians in Arentina now know very well that, even when there are no longer millions of people chanting “all of them must go” in the streets, they have to be extremely careful to not reactivate the ferment that can allow popular protagonism to occupy centre stage again. Even though politicians have managed to construct a new credibility for the federal state, which to some extent relies on a government that claims to be the heir of the project of the urban guerrillas of the 1970s, the flood of protagonism of 2001 left a fertile soil upon which new forms of resistance and grassroots organization have appeared. 106 Some of the most notable of these new forms of resistance include the riots against privatized trains that don’t arrive on schedule (which have caused the de-privatization of some of the services), experiences of grassroots unionism that defy the union bureaucracy, the town protests against open pit mining in several Argentinean provinces (which have forced some mines to shut down), and the protest against the construction of a paper mill on the Uruguayan shore of the Uruguay river.

Colectivo Situaciones’ research militancy is always looking for ways to expand potencia and understand its ramifications and possibilities of composition. To do this they work from inside, inhabiting the situations and establishing an immanent commitment with them in the production of new forms of sociability and alternative images of happiness.

By producing knowledges that animate the multiple points of counterpower, Colectivo Situaciones puts into practice a critique of pedagogical forms of intellectual “intervention” in emancipatory struggles. Capitalism cannot be confronted as if it were an entity existing out there, as if it only consisted in policies emanating from a government, which could be changed once the “right people” become the policy-makers. Capital is a
social relation whose mode of existence is the control of *potentia*, “the hegemony of sadness, exploitation, individualism, and the world of the commodity” (Hipótesis 176). The only way of fighting capital is to assume the challenge of “giving birth to a new way of producing life: exterior, opposite, and more potent than the regime of capital” (174). Being there, thinking with the body, assuming the demands of different *experiencias*, and elaborating with them are Colectivo Situaciones’ contribution to the expansion of *potentiae* and the consolidation of counterpower.

**Experiencias of Counterpower: The Art of Creating a new Sociability**

Colectivo Situaciones conceives counterpower as materially embodied in *experiencias*. The word *experiencia* refers to a more or less circumscribed body of people involved in practices of social transformation. The concept is particularly interesting because it avoids the burden of the fixed identities conferred by “party,” “union,” or even “movement.” Nobody just “adheres” to or “supports” an *experiencia*. *Experiencias* are done; they are defined by bodily presence; they are forms of collective thinking with the body. *Experiencias* have the real dimension of the concrete, the immanence of the actual—they exist in the act, as an act, through action. They are, in this sense, radical negations of the abstractions of spectacular politics.

In Argentina the term is used to refer to the most varied kinds of practices: from a soup kitchen run by a handful of people to a neighbourhood assembly in which dozens of people participate, from human rights organizations to factories run by workers. Sometimes the term is used retrospectively, to refer to *experiencias* such as ERP, FAR, FAP and the Montoneros or to the MLN-Tupamaros. The concepts of power, the state, the use of force, consciousness, class interests, and pedagogy these organizations had in the past radically differ from the views shared by present-day antipedagogical *experiencias*. Still, there is a very important notion at least part of those involved the organizations of the 1970s had in common with today’s *experiencias*: militancy, being involved, requires an existential commitment, a conviction that is not satisfied with practicing activism as if it were a hobby, an identity trait, or a job (Colectivo Situaciones, *Tupamaros*). It is in this common element that Guevarism lives today in Colectivo Situaciones: as “a will to take up commitment, beyond the ways in which this operation is done in one epoch or another, in one region or another” (*Tupamaros*). Perhaps it is
possible to talk about existential militancy as a new sense of self, a re-discovered relation between self, others and *potentia* that had been marginalized by postmodern nihilism.

The *experiencias* that are actively engaged in the production of counterpower are constituent modes of doing that do not organize around a centre. They are points of emergence of a non-capitalist common sense, where the dominant sense is eroded from below. Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between two kinds of revolutions. On the one hand, there are revolutions that transform the regime of social production on the basis of satisfying class interests. These are the revolutions that bring into existence pedagogues that track preconscious interests and look for ways of making them conscious. On the other hand, there are unconscious revolutions, which also produce an overall transformation of the regime of social production, but the transformation in this case defines a rupture that occurs at the level of libidinal investments and desire (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 347-49). *Experiencias* of counterpower aspire to produce this last kind of revolution. They mobilize desires that depart from the norm, producing lines of escape, paths of exodus in the course of which new collective bonds are brought into existence. Unconscious revolutions cannot anticipate the path they are going to take. They resist explication by being forms of thought. They mobilize collectives actively involved in theoretical and practical investigations about the path taken by their emancipatory struggle.

The practice of research militancy has allowed Colectivo Situaciones to accompany the living process of creation that each *experiencia* involves. The *experiencias* described below, along with others with which they compose diffuse networks, have advanced their antipedagogical investigations in the course of producing new bonds and values. All of them predate the formation of Colectivo Situaciones. Some accompanied the collective in the *experiencia* of the Che Guevara Free Lectureship and in the numerous gatherings of social movements that took place in the late 1990s, when the future members of Colectivo Situaciones were still working with El Mate.

The encounters with each *experiencia* have been, in this sense, investigations into languages and hermeneutic devices that help in the collective production of new spaces and times. The acquisition by each *experiencia* of a capacity to read itself takes the form of a permanent inquiry, a permanent formative process, as some of the movements call it.
There are no preestablished goals in these investigations, which take place within the multidimensional time of each situation. The horizon of research is the expansion of potencia, the composition of counterpower, and the weaving of networks.

In the remainder of this section I will introduce three experiencias Colectivo Situaciones has worked with. The list and descriptions are by no means exhaustive. A detailed review of each of the experiencias Colectivo Situaciones has worked with and the teachings they drew from them would exceed the scope of this work. Each experiencia can be seen as a grassroots intervention in the formation of collective bonds, a singular and creative attempt to produce community whose political significance lays in the production of bonds between people where they have been shattered by both the effects of repression and the colonization of social relations by the market.

Contemporary experiencias are responses to the forms of repression, dispersion and exclusion that, in Argentina like in other parts of the world, have resulted in an increased precariousness of life. The consequences include the weakening of the bargaining capacity of living labour, casualisation, outsourcing, migration forced by poverty and the reduction of social wages implicit in the dismantlement of the welfare state (privatization of healthcare, shrinking of unemployment insurance, childcare, charging the cost of education to students, transportation, etc.). This landscape—both a desert of sociability and a jungle of individualism—is the result of the forces of the market overtaking the state as the foundation of the collective bond. The production of situations that can be inhabited, producing their own space and time, defining locally their own perceptions and meanings, without abandoning the universality of their struggle for justice and equality, have turned out to be effective forms of action in a historical moment when criticizing or trying to subvert the state have ceased to be politically fruitful alternatives. The type of collective bond forged by the state and its biopolitics since the nineteenth century (not just the school, the family, the factory, the prison and the asylum, but also the trade union and the party) has been (or, in some places, is in the process of being) subverted by a biopolitics of the market. The transformation of the market is a kind of storm leaving in its path the desolation of dispersed, orphan fragments held in place by the apparatuses of consensus.
Argentina is perhaps unique in that the confidence in the promises of the market in the early 1990s was so absolute that the withdrawal of the state from its containment functions led, a decade later, to a crisis of representation not hypothetical but real. The growing repudiation of all forms of political representation, including left-wing parties and unions, was paralleled by the formation of a variety of grassroots experiencias seeking to provide for themselves and for others what they knew nobody would deliver. Miriads of sovereign experiencias—some of them ephemeral, others long lasting—effectively produced worlds of co-operation and solidarity.

a. H.I.J.O.S.

It was not a coincidence that H.I.J.O.S.—briefly introduced in Chapter 3—became the subject of the first publication of Colectivo Situaciones. Some members of the collective are themselves children of people kidnapped and “disappeared” by military squads during the 1976-83 dictatorship and were founding members of H.I.J.O.S. For some time, H.I.J.O.S. and El Mate shared a house—La Casa de Niceto—that became a prominent center for countercultural events and grassroots politics (Zibechi, Genealogía 97). H.I.J.O.S. is unique in many ways. The organization came about in 1995, at the peak of a period of disenchantment, when nobody believed that those responsible for “disappearing” thirty thousand people would ever be punished. Two federal administrations, plus nearly all the members of both federal legislative chambers—from conservatives to social democrats—had sanctioned laws that pardoned all the levels of responsibility in the massacre in the name of peace and reconciliation. The narrative that accompanied this “pacification” process was what became popularly known as “the two evils theory”: the violence of the left (the armed organizations of the 1970s) had been exterminated by the excessive use of force by the military. Democratic peace could be achieved—as the narrative went—by maintaining an equal distance from these two evils. The disappeared ought to be remembered as victims, while from the torturers and death squad members it was expected that their actions would never be repeated and that they would conduct quiet lives in the newly born representative democracy. Never Again was the government’s slogan.

By introducing the escraches—carefully organized protests in front of the houses of pardoned torturers that involve the participation of entire neighbourhoods—H.I.J.O.S.
nailed a wedge in the heart of the official narrative. The escraches were not held for the
media but for (and with) the neighbours of former torturers and prison camp officers. In
this way, the escraches of H.I.J.O.S. began to rewrite memory from the bottom up. The
visible effect of the escrache was to prevent the torturers from hiding in anonymity. But
its political significance goes beyond this point, because it responds to an exigency of
justice without recourse to the state and without falling into the (also state-friendly) logic
of revenge. Justice becomes a concrete practice, a militant alternative in the face of the
impotence of judiciary bureaucracy and governmental cynicism. The escrache affirms
justice in the act. It does so by not pursuing other ends than the realization of the escrache
itself. There is not an expected outcome from the escrache: “even if one, two, or ten
military people involved in genocide went to jail, the escraches would not cease”
(H.I.J.O.S. in Colectivo Situaciones, Los escraches). Escrachar (to make an escrache to
somebody) is not about denouncing something with the expectation that the government
would do something about it. Rather, as Colectivo Situaciones points out, the escraches
found a different concept of time, one that is subtracted from an impotent present in
which people are melancholically waiting for a miracle to happen, while trying to forget
about the past and holding on to a future built on imprecise promises of progress. The
escraches remember the disappeared and their struggles as a living presence that inhabits
today’s struggles. The past is no longer the memory cultivated by the state nor is it any
more the disengaged scrutiny of historians and museologists. It is “the past of the
present.” And, the future is without promise: justice is a practice, not the wait for a bright
future that never comes.

A few years after the first escraches, the judiciary started to act. An important
number of members of the police and the military involved in torture and disappearances
have been convicted. Escraches continue to be organized and remain a popular practice
among neighbours of still unpunished torturers despite the constant effort by the media to
discredit the practice—never has a torturer been physically abused in an escrache.
Toward the end of the 1990s the escrache had been appropriated by unions, retirees,
students, neighbourhood assemblies, angry consumers, and the traditional left-wing
parties to denounce functionaries, government offices or companies. But these
appropriations have not fully recreated the escrache. They only abstract the features the
external viewer perceives. Colectivo Situaceos and H.I.J.O.S. argue that these appropriations are not real *escraches*. What makes them unreal is their pedagogical intent. The original *escraches* are not meant to give a message to anybody. They do not give a lesson to society, the government, or legislators. Instead, they “function like a machine,” Colectivo Situaciones argue echoing Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of the molecular organization of desire as an ensemble that does not involve full persons or individuals but just organs and flows.

The political subject is the *escrache* itself, the situation it creates, not the people who carry it out. H.I.J.O.S. has nothing to say to society beyond what they *do* in the performance of the *escrache* and the careful labour of composition that organizes its antipedagogical machine throughout the neighbourhood where the *escrache* takes place. The *escrache* is a truth machine because it establishes a connection with people from the neighbourhood and beyond. The functioning of this machine is beyond consensus. It does not seek to convince anybody about the justice of punishment for torturers. It does not deliver lessons of what justice would be like in a just society. It becomes itself an act of justice that connects with people despite and against the general consensus on what justice should be like in a liberal democracy. It can work in this way because it operates as a singularity, a concrete act of creation that is subtracted from the abstractions of consensus.

b. MOCASE

H.I.J.O.S.’s internal organization without leaders and their *escraches* have found many resonances in Argentina’s antipedagogical *experiencias* since the mid-1990s. Still, H.I.J.O.S.’s presence mostly in large cities might raise the question about the need for a certain degree of cosmopolitanism—education, exposure to the media and new technologies, proximity to centers of capitalist activity—for there to be possible a politics without pedagogy. This concern may come from certain Euro- and North American-centric liberal leftists that reject traditional modes of domination for what is archaic in them, implicitly confirming (by overlooking them) the sophisticated modes of control of the consensual democracies of high-technology capitalism (Colectivo Situaciones in Mezzadra 17). Can the marginal position of certain *experiencias* that are removed from the traditional figures of the urban proletariat, not to mention immaterial labour, be an
impediment for them to rely on their own intelligence when it comes to incarnating a radical, non-representational politics? Can these peripheral experiencias use their own resources to produce new forms of life and collective bonds that do not reproduce capitalist relations?

In Mexico and Brazil the affirmative answer to these questions has been constructed in practice, respectively, by the Zapatista communities and the MST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra – Landless Peasant’s Movement). In Argentina, a similar response has been elaborated since the late 1980s by MOCASE (Movimiento Campesino de Santiago del Estero), a landless peasants’ movement spread throughout the semi-arid territory of the northern province of Santiago del Estero. Twelve years after the foundation of the movement—the year Colectivo Situaciones published an issue of their journal dedicated to their militant research with MOCASE—the group’s membership was eight thousand peasant families (roughly more than half of the peasant families of the province), all fighting to keep their land. Their fields were under constant threat from the bulldozers sent by holders of fraudulent titles of ownership who had been seeking, with protection from the state, to start new agribusiness plantations in an area so far considered unprofitable. The northward expansion of the agricultural frontier had been launched by the introduction in the market of new genetically modified soybean varieties.

MOCASE is not an organization; even the term movement has to be applied to it carefully. Even though there is a central body of delegates—whose voluntary representatives are rotated every year without exception—the foundation of the movement is its numerous grassroots communities (comunidades de base), distributed across a large geographical area. There is not a permanent structure beyond the communities. Each of them is “a little universe where the entire organization exists and thrives,” in such way that the central coordination is merely formal, an explicit network mounted on top of the numerous situations that each community constitutes; worlds in their own right, with their own life and independent becomings. These communities are not linked to each other on a permanent basis, nor are they connected from above by the body of delegates, whose sole functions are dealing with the team of lawyers that defend the rights of MOCASE members in court and sharing experiences. The network the
communities form is diffuse and secondary in relation to the commonalities that result from producing at a local level different forms of life.

Local assembly mechanisms, consensus, rotation of delegates are present in every community. But, most often such things are not more than formal causes, the enabling mechanisms of a generalized formative process that allows the peasants to subtract themselves from the established political and economic knowledges. The communities of MOCASE are engaged in alternative forms of distribution and commerce of what they produce, and some of them have even stopped producing for the market altogether and have started to produce collectively at the local level for self-consumption of the community and for barter both within the movement and with movements in other provinces. "Thus autonomy acquires a positivity, an affirmative existence, which openly contrasts—Colectivo Situaciones points out—with the defensive and sorry positions adopted by diverse constructions that call themselves 'ideologically alternative'." The efficient cause, however, the agency that drives the production of another politics, has to be found "in the specific form taken by collective bonds, at different levels, in multiple practices." The communal bond is the basis of the politicity—the quality of being political—of the peasants' life. The politics of the movement are clearly not separated from the places where people live and, in some of the communities, new social forms are emerging "in which the collective is [at the same time] prior to, anterior to, and the foundation of individuality"—and no longer the other way around.

There is no individual or collective mastermind behind MOCASE. The peasants didn't need a pedagogue telling them that they had to become conscious of their true interests. Nor was the movement the product of a "circulation of struggles" from the MST or the Zapatistas. When the first peasants began to create the grassroots communities that would later become networked in MOCASE, the communities of the Brazilian movement were too young and unknown and the Zapatistas were still secretly organizing their army. The movement's self-determination and the alternative forms of life they have created were "found," invented in the course of resisting expropriation. The production of community bonds is fundamentally different from the activities of unions. MOCASE does not bargain with the government as a union would do, as a superstructure acting on behalf of the peasants. Its politics is elsewhere: in the day-to-day production of non-capitalist
forms of existence. This is the form of life they seek to defend from the land expropriators. They know that they cannot compete as individual farmers with the agribusinesses that have been responsible for a massive depopulation of the countryside in the last two decades. Failure as individual entrepreneurs means to migrate to urban slums in search for jobs in a country with very high rates of unemployment.

The peasants are very well aware of the dedication and commitment needed to produce an alternative subjectivity, an activity they refer to as the “formative process” (proceso de formación). Self-education is a top priority in the movement and is intertwined with the new sociability the peasants have produced. It happens at all levels. Many peasants have removed their children from school because, as one of them interviewed by Colectivo Situaciones argues, “they need a good education.” They need an education in which “the teacher is in equal conditions with the students.”

The ambitions of the formative process go beyond overcoming classical pedagogical forms. Peasants understand it as a socialization of knowledge at every level, including—especially—the technical knowledge usually brought to the countryside by university-trained professionals that typically arrive with non-governmental organizations with the promise of helping peasants keep up to date with the latest technologies. The peasants identify this attitude as a form of colonization. Theirs is not a wholesale rejection of technology in the name of a return to tradition. Rather, they accept those new technologies that help them strengthen their autonomy (for instance, some farms have installed solar energy panels to have an independent power supply), but reject those that create dependency (fertilizers and genetically modified seeds). The only NGOs they work with are those that accept that in the encounter both sides (the NGOs and the peasants) have to be open to change. Since the late 1990s, the movement has been working in the creation of their own university. The Universidad Trashumante, another experiencia Colectivo Situaciones has worked with, has been an important support in this project (López Echagüe 67; Colectivo Situaciones and Universidad Trashumante). The goal of the project is to undo the image of the professional as a separate carrier of knowledge; to produce a technical knowledge that is unseparable from the militant project of MOCASE, a constitutive part of the creation of a non-capitalist sociability in which neither knowledge nor politics nor economics are separate from life itself.
c. MTD of Solano

The organization for self-sufficiency, and the possibility of subtraction from the neoliberal market, the media spectacle, and consensual democracy, acquire a different tone when they are the struggle of movements of the urban poor. The massive layoffs that took place in the 1990s in Argentina were the preamble for the rise of the *piquetero* movement. Since the beginning there has been not one *piquetero* movement but many. Some are enrolled in unions, others are directly or indirectly organized by vanguard parties (Trotskyists, mainstream communists, and Maoists). Others are autonomous from unions and parties, but subordinate the day-to-day construction of the movement to strategic objectives. Finally, there are movements that are strictly local and understand autonomy as the production of a politics from and for the situation, in which the creation of fraternal collective bonds is an end in itself.

The Unemployed Worker’s Movement of Solano (MTD of Solano) belongs to this last group. The movement began to organize in 1997 and by 2002 it co-authored with Colectivo Situaciones a book that synthesized the militant research they had done together. At that moment the movement was composed of 800 families living in a suburban slum in southern Buenos Aires. The residents of the neighbourhood come from a long tradition of struggle. They had been living there since they seized a few hectares of public land in 1981, when it still seemed that the dictatorship was going to last forever. The stand-off with the police lasted for six months, until the Malvinas/Falkland Islands war captured national attention and the squatters seized the opportunity to organize their settlement (Zibechi, “Macali, Solano, La Juanita”).

When the expansion of the *piquetero* movement across the country was in full swing, the incipient MTD of Solano battled with the federal government to gain autonomy over the control of the subsidies the unemployed had started to receive in exchange for reducing their roadblocks. Originally structured as a wage in exchange for community services, such as sweeping streets or collecting garbage, the subsidies were diverted by the MTD toward projects that could secure and expand their autonomy. For example, they have used the money to build concrete block factories that provide raw materials for the collective construction of houses and community facilities, to assemble blacksmithing, carpentry, and electricity workshops, and to run bakeries and collective
vegetable gardens that provide affordable food to people in the neighbourhood. Other productive projects involve clothing and shoe manufacture.

The organization of self-sufficiency has become a priority in the knowledge that the government will cut the subsidies as soon as the consensus turns against the movements of the unemployed. Self-sufficiency has also been the way to escape capital’s ability to command unemployed workers as a “reserve army.” The piqueteros of MTD of Solano have sought to escape monetary forms of resolving their needs and desires, seeking to undo the condition that defines proletarians as “free labour,” and thus removing creative power from the ontological foundation it finds in wage labour in capitalism (Gago and Sztulwark). Autonomy, for MTD of Solano, involves a form of exodus, a withdrawal into practices of production and exchange organized on the basis of friendship, solidarity and co-operation.

Members of the MTD of Solano refuse to consider themselves “excluded.” The discourse about exclusion, a late admission by capital of the reality of exploitation, presupposes that the poor are pawns, incapable of autonomous will power and capacity to organize themselves (Hipótesis 59). The movement considers that their struggle as unemployed is not for inclusion in the system of wage labour and the commodification of needs.

The roadblock became a defining element of the identity of the piquetero movement at the precise moment when Argentina’s highways and bridges became the blood vessels of an economy hooked up to global capital flows, in which productivity depends on the speed of circulation of commodities, people and information. Several piqueteros have been killed in roadblocks and many others suffer the daily harassment of visible and undercover police agents. Fear is experienced as a material presence in the suburbs of Buenos Aires, where the police regularly torture and shoot people chosen at random among the poor (López Echagüe 34-35). An affective force of decomposition and fragmentation, fear has been a dominant element in the extreme poor’s passivity, fatalism, and skepticism.

In Solano, the production of a collective identity in whose construction the unemployed are actively engaged has been fundamental to restore dignity, self-confidence and self-esteem. The sense of dignity they pursue does not have a predefined
content. The *piqueteros* regard it as a quest that cannot be separated from an ongoing formative process (*proceso de formación*) which, as in MOCASE, is present in everything they do together. At one level, this process is a form of individual and collective awareness that involves direct democracy assemblies which include the movement, and the discussions that accompany every practice, from organizational criteria to how to raise their children.

At another level, the MTD of Solano considers, like MOCASE, that the demonopolization of knowledge is a requirement for the construction of an alternative, non-capitalist sociability. The *piqueteros* think that, when working on productive projects, democracy is only rhetoric if the knowledge of how to do the job is not equally distributed. Politically, without socialization of knowledge, the power positions of those who have been most active is reinforced (*Hipótesis* 44). Collective learning activities are aimed at reducing dependence on those who tend to be most frequently chosen as delegates. Forms of sociability have to be learnt, both by practicing other values and by criticizing those imposed by the school, the mass media, the family, the church, and monetary exchanges.

Antipedagogy is much more than the practice of grassroots democracy itself, which for other movements is generally a means toward another end, their moment of truth, their serious business. In these cases, the assembly form becomes another explication, a technique of consciousness-raising in which the party line does not come as a consistent piece of propaganda but in more subtle rhetorical forms skilfully brandished by “facilitators.” In the MTD’s antipedagogical conception, the formative process is “an experience whose point of departure are concrete interests and desires” oriented toward “the production of social bonds and collective thinking” (MTD de Solano and Colectivo Situaciones, *Maestro Ignorante*). More than finding solutions, collective thinking involves being able to pose questions together. This is possible only when there is a shared sense of community. In contrast, the *piqueteros* and *piqueteras* of the MTD define individualism as the inability to participate in the creation of a sense of commonality.

“The toughest battle is inside us,” says Alberto Spagnolo, a former priest, fired from the neighbourhood’s church, and founding member of the MTD of Solano. He believes that struggle is a way of learning, and learning is a form of struggle when every
aspect of life is politicized (López Echagüe 57). A significant aspect of the formative process is the day-to-day struggle against individualistic modes of thinking and doing. “It is difficult to construct something collectively with a capitalist mentality,” argues another member of the movement (MTD de Solano and Colectivo Situaciones, Hipótesis 38). Self-awareness about individualistic values cannot be resolved on a discursive plane. It requires forms of life in which collective values can be put into practice.

The MTD of Solano thinks and produces politics not by endorsing certain programmes, not even an autonomist one, or by adopting a particular discourse. It is, rather, as Colectivo Situaciones suggests, a counterpower that produces a common sense, values and modes of existence “superior to those which, in a specific situation, are produced by capitalism” (Hipótesis 45). Direct democracy assemblies and piquetes (roadblocks) are political moments not only in the literal sense in which they are understood by piquetero organizations constructed by the parties of the Left, but also, and fundamentally, in the sense that they are part of an ongoing generation of relations, values and community.

For the MTD of Solano, social change is an open and situated practice, whose point of departure is a theoretical elaboration of the crisis from the point of view of how it is experienced by the unemployed. While other organizations devote their effort to the accumulation of power for a revolutionary overthrow the capitalist state and its replacement by a “workers’ state” or for influencing a reform process that allows for greater inclusion in the current state, MTD of Solano believe that an alternative power can only be generated by having their situation as the sole point of reference of their concept of social change.

The construction of power based on the generative force of direct democracy and composition is not part of an exploration into new forms of rule. After the exhaustion of the regime that managed to gain legitimacy, since 1983, through consensual democracy, a number of direct democracy experiencias have emerged in Argentina. Many activists within the Left have seen in these forms the seeds of a system in formation. Some groups even sought to formalize them into new organizations (the most patent case being the defunct interneighbourhood assembly of Buenos Aires), sometimes looking for ways to export them where they do not yet exist. The MTD of Solano has a different view.
What the *piqueteros* and *piqueteras* from Solano question about consensual democracy is not just that it limits direct participation. If mediations were reduced, and if the possibilities for action defined by rational choice could transform every citizen into an active participant, there would still be a predetermined set of limits that would need to be respected. As Colectivo Situaciones suggests, for these movements the struggle to construct power does not consist in building a system in which the options are codified from a working class perspective or in which the entitlements of citizens are extended. Those options would only create new bases for inclusion and exclusion. In a constitutive construction, such as MTD of Solano’s, the terms that define the situation are part of what is to be constructed. The constitutive power of the MTD has an immanent relation to the mechanisms of construction of subjectivity. In contrast to inclusion, “immanence implies inhabiting the experience, opening it to the possible potentialities of the composition” (Hipótesis 19). A construction of power below is not a preparation for a day in which power will be held from above. It is a refusal to accept that politics has to do with the centrality of state representations.

**Intellectual Ignorance and Mass Intelligence**

As practiced in research militancy, ignorance is neither spontaneous nor passive. It requires research, a practical investigation in which both mind and body are involved. If this is true for everybody, it is more so for those used to working predominantly with the mind, for it is arguably easier for intellectuals to slip back into the socially sanctioned hierarchical forms of their judgements. To become a true ethical ignorant requires an enormous and sustained effort, from which it is easy to be distracted. The ignorance that leads to the formation of common notions is not spontaneous. It is patiently conquered by “putting the body,” being there, in the situation.

The suspension of pedagogy requires concrete steps. Antipedagogy is a craft, a constant quest, a form of research that is also co-research and self-research, more interested in the questions than in the answers, more concerned about the journey than about the point of arrival. As Marta Malo, from the Spanish collective *Precarias a la Deriva*, argues referring to the work of Colectivo Situaciones, research militancy takes “research as a lever for interpellation, subjectivation, and political recomposition … using the mechanisms of the survey, the interview, and the discussion group as
an excuse to talk to others and talk amongst themselves, to challenge distances in
a hyperfragmented social space and to try to speak their own reality, in search of
common notions that describe it and forms of resistance, cooperation, and flight
that puncture it, giving metropolitan materiality to the Zapatista ‘walking we ask
questions’” (38).

The antipedagogy of Colectivo Situaciones, like every investigation oriented
toward the formation of common notions, is a form of empiricism. This approach,
however, is fundamentally different from the empiricism oriented by the quest for
knowledge, whose inquiry takes place from a discipline, a subdiscipline, or other pre-
established academic or institutional configurations. Inevitably positivistic, these
empiricists are, as Badiou points out, professionals “in the maintenance of the apparatuses
of discernment” of that which is already counted as part of the situation (Being and Event
292). The empiricism of knowledge sometimes operates by, first, establishing a
“theoretical” plane of consistency and, second, practicing some form of applied research
that either validates or falsifies the theory. Other times the plane of consistency is
common sense itself: the researcher assumes a naïve approach to the collection of data
from which a theory is inferred. Naivety, here, is basically forgetting that, unless an
operation of subtraction takes place, the individual does not speak but rather is “spoken”
by common sense.

In contrast to the empiricism of knowledge, the ignorance of antipedagogues seeks
to be an empiricism of thought that accompanies the thought of those in struggle. To do
that, it “forgets” the count as One determined by disciplinary and institutional boundaries.
It subtracts itself from common sense—disciplinary, institutional, or otherwise—and
from the dispositifs that keep it in place. The empiricism of thought is not Deleuzian, or
Foucauldian, or anything else for that matter. It is not by being partisan toward other
empiricists of thought that it secures its position. Subtraction, however, does not mean
pulling oneself out of intellectual debates. Rather, it means recognizing that thought takes
place elsewhere. Removed from finality, the study of potentia is empiricist and pragmatic
because potentia does not have a goal: it is nothing outside the act in which it exists.108

It took years for the Zapatistas to learn from the indigenous peoples of Chiapas the
art of patience and and the disposition to listen. Subcommander Marcos, who in his
earlier life was a university professor in education, went to the mountains of southern Mexico in the early 1980s to teach the indigenous the history of their exploitation. He soon realized that becoming part of the mountain fundamentally requires listening more than talking: “Before we had learned to speak, too much, as all the Left do ... at least in Latin America: its specialty is talking, no? We learned to listen, forced to do that” (Marcos qtd. in Prakash and Esteva Escaping Education 48). And from the Mayan peoples Marcos and his comrades learned to transform ignorance into common notions: “We had a very square notion of reality. When we collide with reality, that square gets very dented.... Then, when they ask: Who are you? Marxists, Leninists, Castroists, Maoists, or what? I don’t know. Really I don’t know. We are ... a hybrid, of a confrontation, of a shock, in which, I believe, fortunately we lost .... [T]he Zapatista army is massified, Indianized, and becomes absolutely contaminated by the community forms” (48).

It was because they listened that the Zapatistas rose up in arms in January of 1994. They had told the indigenous communities that everything in the world scene indicated that it was not the right moment for revolution. From the fall of the Soviet Union, to the demise of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, to the peace talks in Guatemala and El Salvador, to the isolation of Cuba—everything seemed to indicate that revolution would have to wait. That was not what the indigenous communities believed. They told the incipient Zapatista army: “We don’t want to know what is happening in the rest of the world” (Esteva and Prakash 48).

Ignorance requires to put the virtualized “world”—the collection of facts, factoids, models of revolution, recipes of emancipation, threats of rising authoritarianism, and both progressive and reactionary academic insights, absorbed through education apparatuses, communication media, and other forms of repetition of the common sense—aside, recognizing the incompleteness of the knowledge we acquire through imagination and language. The suspension of moral subjective space—the idealized division into parts of the idealized totality, such as (but not limited to) class, gender, ethnicity—and moral subjective time—from the forms of finalism, progress, and eschatology to definitions of happiness in terms of individual success and career prestige—demands the production of an ethical space and time, the situation as a space-time of encounters and of grassroots
production of alternative collective bonds. Changing the world requires a subtraction from “the world.” A subtraction includes the suspension of discourse, a silence whose value the Zapatistas have learned in a “world” where the currency of communication is devalued (Colectivo Situaciones, “El silencio”). Perhaps it is time for a Zapatista revision of the Thesis XI: Some philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways, the point is to invent a new one. But the invention of a new world cannot have freedom and justice as a horizon to achieve. Rather, justice and freedom are what drive, in the situation, the creation of a new world as an ongoing production that undoes the natural order of functions, places, and time.

How do the new relations look when radical processes of social change understand resistance as creation? The only way in which ignorance can help produce common notions is by thinking with the body, inhabiting the situation, encountering the desire for a non-capitalist sociability that cannot wait for the wise insights of master thinkers or the lessons in democracy from the professionals of consensus. For, as Colectivo Situaciones puts it, “neither politicians nor intellectuals really think; they ‘know stuff’ (sometimes honestly, other times dishonestly). But thinking has to be done, once and again, by each, in situation” (Hipótesis 172).

What is it, really, to think in situation? What is a sign that thought actually happens? What it is not, to be sure, is the successful attempts to raise consciousness, the familiarization of aspiring revolutionary subjects with “key authors,” or the renewal of activist jargon with words such as “counterpower” or “autonomy.” Thought in the situation does not arise from adopting the advice from experts. By themselves, grassroots communication and popular education techniques facilitate the production and circulation of opinions, but they do not necessarily result in thinking. Language indeed does communicate something in the situation because it is there where it is not independent from lived experience, but there is no thought politically when all there is are opinions being exchanged.

Politically, there is thought when there is a departure from the known, when collective experiences are intense enough to give way to collective transformations. An intense experience “has the power to open ourselves to new points of view” (MTD de Solano and Colectivo Situaciones, Maestro Ignorante). Thinking in situation operates by
demolishing preexisting logics and assembling new ones. Thought is an encounter that shatters the relations between bodies, the links between words and things; it is a wind that sweeps the ground with fury, altering the existing identities, classifications, functions and capacities. Thinking is what happens when nothing continues to be as it used to be. However, politics ceases to be thought precisely at the moment when the former is identified with strategies to take, keep or administer power. Otherwise, as Colectivo Situaciones suggests, thought and politics coincide because neither “exist ‘above’ the concrete and collective practices of life” and both “inhabit inside struggle and popular experiencias” (MOCASE). To think, then, is much more than being able to use the faculty of thought, as if the latter was an object that could be put to different uses, one of which would be politics. Thinking, like politics, finds its realization in resistance and creation.

This is why the connection between thought and politics does not require the activity of a specialized group of people—progressive teachers, humanitarian experts, intellectuals assimilated by a Party, smart propaganda agents, skilled magazine designers, instructive filmmakers or the internet savvy members of the most specialized layer of living labour of high-technology capitalism. When those who are going to be liberated constitute an ignorant other whose capacity to think and create needs an external supplement, ignorance ceases to be a force that propels inquiry, or a not-knowing that expands potentiae and liberates from existing classifications and identities.

Raúl Cerdeiras suggests that most of what is today considered political thought are in fact discursive practices “expressed predominantly under the form of journalistic commentary” (“Manifiesto Político” 84). Plenty of political opinions, whether in mass-mediated forms or in the form of academic papers, are in circulation, yet politics as thought is taking place elsewhere. Politics conceived as creation cannot be inferred from the knowledge of reality, because the possibility of politics exists precisely where the chain of logical deductions reaches an impasse. Politics is a line of flight, an event that deposes truths, a distortion of the world as we know it. In politics, there is thought only when there is transformative action. However, there is no sovereign human action that does not involve thinking, only that thinking begins when reason runs out of reasons, when it “cannot say anything coherently with its own postulates” (Cerdeiras, “Manifiesto
No matter how much the knowledge of society and culture advances, it can at best produce descriptions of the reality it studies. Yet, even good representations never get close enough to the real. They can never know what bodies can do. Not much hope is left for the “articulation” between “theory” and “practice” because it presupposes decisions separated from the bodies over which reason exercises command. A radical idea is nothing if it is not inhabited and experienced—i.e. thought with the body in the situation.

This discussion brings us back to a point noted in earlier chapters—the enduring radicalism of Marx’s departure from the old materialism in his “Theses on Feuerbach.” In the old materialism, the one of the natural sciences and of the scientific study of all forms of human activity, the distinction between those who think and those who don’t is clearly drawn. A superior class ensures the surveillance and education of individuals, but also the formation of individuals by producing a given use of time, a distribution of space. The old materialism is the foundation of biopolitics. It identifies knowledge with freedom and justice as long as the men and women of knowledge set the conditions. Its slogan, as Rancière mockingly puts it, is “liberty, equality, fraternity, and Bentham” (Althusser 22). Marx opposed this old materialism with a new materialism whose premise was the study of concrete social relations for the revolutionary transformation of the world. The distinction was groundbreaking. It was the event that launched Marxism as the last of the great political inventions, as a true event of political thinking. It is not necessarily the case that the contemplative and interpretative characters of old materialism are opposed to Marx’s thesis that “men make history” (“men,” here, of course, meaning human beings). The problem is that they believe that history is too complex to be grasped and made by workers, the unemployed, poor people, the excluded, in sum, the proletariat, without the assistance of science, the Party, the Theory of intellectuals, or some other form of intellectual mediation. Marx’s new materialism demands a method that can account for thought right where it is taking place. Research militancy is a quest in that direction: an antipedagogy of intellectual-ignorants knitting common notions amidst mass intelligence.

The old materialism, the one of the scientific pedagogues who think on behalf of the masses, confirms the division of labour that maintains the hierarchical position of university specialists and other authorized experts in place. Against this view, the new
materialism proclaims that “the time has come to study the real world and its transformation; that the time has come for a new intelligence that is not the one of the learneds” because “the oppressed are intelligent and it is from their intelligence that the weapons for their liberation are born” (Rancière, Althusser 40). The intelligence of resistance that is at the same time creation is not a privilege of the learned. This intelligence forged in struggle should force every radical intellectual “to rethink the question of his/her practice and knowledge, to reflect about his/her position in the distribution of the places of power and knowledge that reproduce the domination of the bourgeoisie” (42). A mass intelligence that capital appropriates as surplus value is, simultaneously, the source of novel forms of resistance.

The statement that intelligences are equal does not seek to prove anything. It is a call to look at that other element that none of us have in the same measure. Jacotot argued it was will, Spinoza that it was potentia. Which mechanisms establish a link between will and intelligence, setting in motion a virtuous circle of liberating creations of grassroots power? Such is the preeminent question militant research seeks to answer. The premise is to find the instances in which potentia remains focused until thought arises, giving birth to a politics that is not confused with police. There is no other way to keep track of this development than through an honest practice of ignorance. Its efficacy depends on keeping in mind that the will to sustain ignorance is constantly challenged by multiple mechanisms that dilute desire and reinstitute the division of intelligences. The fruitful encounter of intelligence and will that makes possible the becoming of political subjects requires its own space and time, a space for the formation of common notions cut out from the social configurations that deplete desire and distract will. This requires a militant fidelity to the processes of creation and resistance, a thought of the body that practices its research militancy with sufficient ignorance to know that it does not know what a body can do.
Pedagogy and antipedagogy appear to me as two ways in which thought and politics relate. Or, perhaps, as two conceptions of knowledge and thought that correspond to two different concepts of politics. The relation between pedagogy and antipedagogy is not dialectical. It would be dialectical if these two approaches competed with each other on the same plane. If they were two opposing poles, it would be conceivable a compromise between them. However, this is not possible, as Joseph Jacotot realized after governments sought to implement his antipedagogy as a policy, only to turn it into a new pedagogy.

Antipedagogy and pedagogy start from different presuppositions. In a pedagogical view, intellectuals assist politics with their knowledge, which, in this perspective, is equivalent with their thought. In contrast, antipedagogy assumes that everybody can think. No previous knowledge is required. In this view, thinking is the capacity to open up the world, retracing the steps of the operation of counting that froze the multiple into the One.

From the point of view of pedagogy, thinking is inherent in knowledge. Knowledge prepares people for thinking. Those who know more, those men and women whose knowledge can be verified and certified by the standards of a society, whichever they are, are also the most qualified for thinking.

In this perspective, knowledge is the formation of ideas by processes that, in the end, can be reduced to operations of discernment and classification performed by a subject who is faced with an object. The ideas thus formed are representational. These ideas are considered to reveal truths about the world. Knowledge assumes a correspondence between these ideas and the objects they relate to. In the model of knowledge from which the pedagogical view results, truth and correctness are equivalent. Truths are communicable and teachable. They can be expressed in conversation and writing. Electronic media can convey them as well.

Knowledge assigns to this conception of truth a high value. Truth is good. Knowledge can discern the truth of a society; in other words, it can determine that which,
for a collectivity, is Good. Knowledge supports a moral vision of the world. Its ability to
discern and classify is also a capacity to distinguish Good from Evil. It follows from this
view that those who are best qualified in the terrain of knowledge are also the most apt to
establish the best interest of the community as a whole or, at least, what is best for any of
its parts.

The pedagogical view of the world is spontaneous. It corresponds to perceptions
of that which is natural in the ordering of beings. Its spontaneity has been systematized
and institutionalized in educational apparatuses, which hand pedagogy down from one
generation to the next. At the same time, these apparatuses are offspring of a vision
structured around the notion of what is Good for the community. Performance in
education establishes measures of intelligence and, at the same time, of ignorance. Thus
established, intelligence defines a relation to the true and the Good. Ignorance, in turn, is
relative to intelligence. Emancipation, conceived in this moral vision as the social
achievement of the Good, is a process that requires solving the problem of the inequality
of intelligences. For, in this way, more individuals would be able to make better choices
using their reason and, above all, use their reason instead of their emotions and affects.

The moral vision can assume a different pedagogical perspective. It can, for
instance, consider that a part of society—a class that can be discerned by knowledge—
already contains the essence of the Good. However, the Good cannot be achieved because
the class is separated from the realization that it is a part and that it possesses a capacity
for attaining the Good society. Thus conceived, the class is separated from becoming the
Subject that it already is by a gap in consciousness. This perspective is not so spontaneous
as the previous pedagogy. An intervention is necessary. Somebody (not necessarily an
individual ‘somebody’) has to reunite the Subject with its consciousness; something
needs to be done. Where can that somebody come from? Here is where a point of contact
between this pedagogy and its more spontaneous cousin appears. If there are already
apparatuses to sort the intelligent from the ignorant, why not use them? Those who have
acquired their intelligence through the discipline of knowledge can help the Subject to
both come to terms with its lack of consciousness and confront the obstacles that are in
the way between its present misery and its bright future, the Good awaiting at the end of
History. But first they need to use the intelligence they have cultivated to learn
revolutionary theory. Later, they can use this capacity to carry out their emancipatory
duty.

But, the fact of the matter is that History is sometimes trickier than it appears even
to the sharpest pedagogues. Unexpected events do happen and its end can be announced
prematurely. Still, in case History fails to follow the plan, there is always the possibility
of returning to good old spontaneous pedagogy. In this case the Subject can be advised to
be realistic and to seek accommodation within democratic consensus, a regime carefully
established and administered by the most competent specialists in the discernment and
classification of the parts of society. After all, the parts are many, each marked by
insurmountable differences with respect to the others, each needing to affirm its own
separate identity. In the marketplace of identities organized through mechanisms of
consensus, different pedagogies compete in reuniting different Subjects with their
respecting consciousnesses. They all strive to assert their inclusion in the consensus:
minorities want to be represented. What are not questioned in the game of consensus are
the rules of the game themselves. Nobody should dare to dismantle the norm that
excludes and includes, the very social bond that defines the community as a totality.

The many appear as subdivisions of society considered as One single entity when
the social bond that defines their existence as many is not problematized. But it is
possible to conceive the many as many, as a multitude, in such way that counting them as
One becomes only a secondary effect. Yet, we can use this way of counting for non-
pedagogical purposes only if we understand the multitude as a description. A description,
in this sense, is not a sign that points to an empirical reality; that is the way
representational ideas operate. The description is, rather, an image of completion, a
cognitive map that allows the many to conceive themselves as many—in fact, a map of
the many eccentric parts that stand up in struggle to proclaim that they are not being
counted, that they are marginalized, and that they can use that autonomy constructively.
The map should not be Ptolemaic, or Copernican for that matter. No part ought to be
considered to occupy the centre. Not even the part that, because of the qualifications it
has attained in the knowledge apparatus, has the capacity to bring the entire multitude to
encounter its bright destiny. Even if it is true that in our times the Intellect has become
General, even if the Subject and those who know are now the same, pedagogy still orients
the transformation of the world. Yet, the problem was, let's remember, not to interpret the world, but to change it.

The problem of changing the world, as Marx saw it in his *Theses on Feuerbach* and as I have been arguing in this work, is not a problem of how much knowledge is needed. Changing the world is beyond knowledge. To change the world—to do politics—we have to think in such way that knowledge is neither the premise nor the promise of change. A first step in this direction is to conceive thought as different from knowledge. Thought, then, is no longer the operation that discerns and classifies. It is, rather, what undoes the outcome of discernment and classification. There is thought in the passage from the One to the multiple. Thought does not produce truths that can be represented, written, and communicated. Thought is its own truth. The encounter with truth appears in the act of thinking. Unlike knowledge, thought does not know what will happen tomorrow. It is built on chance and, for that reason, it is always a wager.

Politics changes the world because it is a thought; that is, it is a capacity to see the multiple and to undo the One. This capacity is a power to do, a power to act, a *potentia*, as Spinoza called it. The vision that defines things by their *potentia* is ethical because there is no closure of the One in its horizon. It does not need to define a totality, a social bond, in order to determine the universality of its destiny, such as, for instance, the nation defines the scope of the universality of the rights and freedoms of its citizens. In an ethical vision of the world, each point of the totality contains the universe; each is capable of undoing finitudes and pursuing their freedom to the infinite. When it comes to politics, what matters is precisely the act, the moment when that capability is exercised. *Potentia* exists only in such act.

Politics is rare. *Potentia* is not constant. Its expansion is not spontaneous. It requires an effort. Without this effort, if we abandon ourselves to the view of the world that comes to us spontaneously, if we live immersed in common sense, we can never be free. But when it happens, and it has happened in recent years in various parts of the world, politics is a thought that is thought by everyone involved. This conception of politics assumes that everyone is equally qualified to think. There is no need to rely upon the classification of knowers and ignorants by the apparatuses of education in order to determine who can guide political thought. In this perspective, one intelligence is equal to
another *in actu*, it is not an equality that can be inferred from, or demonstrated in relation to, the standards of intelligence in a society. Equality is not a social problem because a society is already a problematic concept, a concept that leaves aside the operation of counting society as One.

The spontaneous view of the world that we have to abandon is the one that considers the world as one single situation. There is not one situation but many. We come to see that we are in a situation when we suspend that which makes us feel participants of a world whose reality fits in a single image. Such suspension is a subtraction, a deliberate act of cutting oneself out. It is not possible to think if we do not perform a subtraction, create a situation. Thinking and subtraction—from knowledge, from the spectacle, from representation—happen at the same moment. We can *know* many things about the world, even more so today, with our sophisticated communication networks, but still, we can only *think* in a situation.

There is no thought in the reunion of a Subject with its consciousness. Nor is there thought in the attempts, successful or not, carried out by outsiders to cause such reunion. The thought of politics is always collective. It involves bodies as much as it does minds. *Potentia* is, fundamentally, a problem of bodies: of how bodies affect each other. Those affects are inherent in thought. The affects between bodies are a form of thinking from which thought cannot be abstracted if we want it to keep its *potentia*. Thought thinks from and through those affects all the time. The effort involved in thinking summons both ideas and affects, all the time, even when we believe that we are only using our mind.

In many situations it is possible to think politics. Those thinking in one do not need to talk to those thinking in others to think in unison. They may talk, but communication is not a requirement. Thought is not in the talk. Thought needs neither explicit networks for the circulation of alternative discourse nor contractual agreements to guarantee counterhegemonic constructions. Thinking is dissolving the social bond at any of the points where it is day by day reproduced and reinvented. To think is to become a minority, but being a minority in numerical terms is not politically relevant. Because the emphasis is in *becoming* as much as it is in minority. To become a minority is not to accept the norm of the majority. Any of the numeric minorities can be included in the norm, and yet the norm will not change significantly.
I understand antipedagogy as a position that men and women of knowledge can take to accompany a process in which politics is a thought. Militant research is one way of assuming this position. I have offered Colectivo Situaciones as an example. There are many other comrades, in different countries, asking similar questions, looking for similar (or, perhaps, different) ways of approaching experiences of thought in times when knowledge institutions have become increasingly closed to thinking and when many activists are still too comfortable with playing their part in the pedagogy of consciousness.

I seem to have used the example of militant research in the last chapter to reterritorialize antipedagogy, to propose it in the form of a model that can be followed. Ignorance, then, would mean nothing. Something is known; the solution is here: you only have to study it meticulously and apply it to your own situation. Antipedagogy would seem to be the ultimate explication of a pedagogy I am making no effort to conceal. Thus, I hope not to disappoint the reader by saying that he or she should expect to learn nothing from my account of Colectivo Situaciones' research militancy. True learning is in knowing how to exercise the power to think, which is very different from expanding the capacity of our encyclopaediae by adding to it the representation of somebody else's thought. The *potentia* of an idea can only be verified in situation, that is, in the “here and now” that each of us inhabits. That power can be reached and expanded only from a militant practice of ignorance.

Yet, as the Collectif Malgré Tout points out, “we can only talk about our situation, and that is already very difficult” (“Manifesto”). We always talk from our own experience and that experience is always situated. The academic situation is determined today in a way intellectual activity has never been before, by its subsumption under the capitalist production of life forms. It is a key piece of the apparatus of consensus. It is almost impossible not to notice the current casualisation of labour that involves activities of the mind. The situation of “intellectuals” today includes the struggles of those seeking to escape the mind-numbing, stress-ridden, and existentially precarious condition of teaching and learning in today’s universities. Temporary, contingent, flexible labour power and the reality of those who arrive at jobs involving symbolic manipulation for whom their precarious conditions hang over our heads like a Damocles sword.
What our situation intensifies is the condition of the pedagogue as both public and private thinker (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 374-80.). *Public* in the sense that, as academics, we are thinkers of the state, thinkers of universality, producers and reproducers of the world as One situation. As a (wo)man of reason, the pedagogue is eternally superior to those whom he/she will never emancipate because his/her position is defined as closer to the ideal of the true, the just, the right, the model society, the paradigm of multiplicity. Whether that society is a conservative image of law and order, a socialist nation, a democratic alternative to neoliberalism, or the multitude organized by the cognitariat makes little difference from this point of view, which is not of *content* but of *form*. *Private* in that the position of public pedagogue is attained through competition in the labour market. It is a competition that foregrounds individuality, a sense of privacy that idealizes the individuation of thought. By attaching proper names to thought, it effects the transmutation of knowledge into thought. Those who think become distinguishable from those who don't. Thought ceases to be the activity of multiple singularities that shatters knowledge. But, as we have seen, neither the state nor its functionaries (in their capacity as such) think. Only people think.

This is the sense in which we should be concerned about the ongoing casualisation of academic activity, for precariousness and fear of exclusion only force aspiring public scholars to further individuation, enhancing their aesthetic of self-presentation to look more knowledgeable, less ignorant. A paradox, under the current conditions, as the time for knowledge is sacrificed, more and more, to the Gods of academic excellence.

Concerned with the destiny of academic thought, the organizers of *Taller de Pensamiento* ("Thought Workshop"), an *experiencia* that developed when a group of young professors of the undergraduate epistemology seminar at the University of Buenos Aires decided, in 1989, to look at their own activity under a critical light. Universities were leaving behind the traces of dictatorial rule, and all sorts of progressive ideas, forbidden for many years, were again present in the classrooms. The workshop sought to be an experiment in thought; it wanted to problematize the form of thought, not merely its content. In the literature the young scholars used they included some of the most incisive critiques of academic scientism, literature illustrating a range of questions from the false pretense of academic neutrality to the nonexistent intellectual value of academic papers.

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whose only function is to enable academic careers. At the end of the workshop they realized that students always ended up repeating what they had learned in class: instead of thinking freely “they were writing papers!” (Cuervo and Fenoglio 64). The need to create the Taller arose from the realization that “the most exact theoretical statement becomes false when it allows one to hide the act of enunciation … we can say something with the tongue while with the body we teach the opposite” (64). The young professors staged a “Trial to Academic Knowledge,” after whose conclusion their experiencia was expelled from one of the most progressive faculties of the University of Buenos Aires.

The university as an institution will never overcome professionalization, careerism and bureaucracy to become a place in which thinkers and knowledge, politics and research, become indistinguishable. Its business is pedagogical. As universitas it reproduces the world as One situation. It is in its mode of being, in the way it functions within the regime of knowledge, as an apparatus of capture, separation, and normalization.

In 1673 Spinoza was offered a teaching position at the University of Heidelberg. He declined it because he feared having to renounce his personal philosophical work in order to teach. But he feared even more the perspective of having to accept the empty quarrels about established laws and religious precepts. Spinoza was not a rich man and knew that teaching at a prestigious university would have given him financial tranquility (Letter XLVIII). But he had a refined sense to distinguish the threshold separating a thinker of the state and a nomad, a warrior of ideas.

These anecdotes, however, do not rule out universities as places where thought can take place. Universities have indeed been magnificent scenarios for thought. Many new ideas that hit the classrooms and hallways of universities in the last decades, most of the time not through the official curricula, enjoyed an antipedagogical effect for some time. The effect lasted while the bearers of the new ideas felt entitled to speak, undermining the well-established position of Knowledge, introducing methods and practices that shook the existing disposition of bodies in space and time. The problem begins once the new idea becomes part of a new status quo. The antipedagogical effect immediately ceases. The idea becomes part of the state. It no longer belongs to the real movement that changes the state of things. It defines a new police of places and times, a
new order of bodies, words and things. It no longer subverts that which exists; it no longer founds new becomings; it does not open new spaces any more.

There is a reason why the antipedagogy of militant researchers decries not only the accepted standards for the production of knowledge in the academic situation (including the desires leading to the production of those standards), but also long-held certainties on the revolution and even the more recent hypotheses on the political centrality of cognitive labour, only to propose more questions instead of answers. No discussion of potentia and situation, of the production of a new sociality and alternative social bonds can replace their actual existence here and now.

From my position as a person in the academic situation I have produced an interpretation of antipedagogy. Academia defines a specific form of relations between its inside and the objects in the world. The world comes into view as phenomena, always external to the situation of the observer. A representational and substantialist standpoint reigns supreme in this mode of producing knowledge. My observation of antipedagogy is no less guilty of this.

As Colectivo Situaciones points out, the louder the critique of representation and the voicing of autonomous alternatives, the greater the risk of turning them into abstract principles (MOCASE 40). If nomads want their war machine to last, they have to be aware of the power of co-optation of state science. In this regard, my hope is that antipedagogy does not become a subject of academic research. This thesis is already endangering antipedagogy by abstracting it from the practices where it emerged. To turn situations into theoretical objects only reproduces the subject-object relation.

The transcendental position of an individual ego—the author's—who communicates a piece of information to a hypothetical interested readership reproduces the trans-situational imaginary of secular universality whose origin can be traced back to the beginnings of capitalist modernity, or perhaps even earlier. If we do not assume that the position of academic writing is one more situation, with fragile meanings and potentiae that can be activated, there is no way out of this problem. But if we do not assume some sense of universality, we can quickly slip towards relativism; writing becomes a reactionary, self-contemplative act. To write from a situation is to recognize that all there is outside the situation are other situations. Each of them is a scenario of
thought; all of them are capable of thinking politics by themselves. Pedagogy and antipedagogy should not be understood as a dualism or a pair of identities. Nobody is a pedagogue in all situations. An antipedagogue can become pedagogical at any time. And there is a fleeting moment of antipedagogy when somebody who is usually ignored dares to speak out and is listened to.

There is no more room here to discuss whether it is possible to prevent the cooptation of criticism or how to keep the gap through which multiplicity and invention flood the normalized, bureaucratized, and professionalized environment of the classroom and summon thought to the scene. These problems have been faced by radicals in knowledge-reproduction institutions for a long time, regardless of the content of the knowledge taught and learned. Nietzsche, for instance, pointed out that “the ‘truth’ about which our professors talk so much certainly seems to be an unpretentious creature from which we have nothing disorderly or extraorderly to fear: a good-natured, easygoing creature who repeatedly assures all the established powers that it does not want to cause any trouble; after all, it is only ‘pure knowledge’” (Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer as Educator” 184).

A similar spirit animates the distinction made by Marx in the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach between those who interpret the world and those who change it.

In the face of the new protagonism—with a politics of multitudes—the question is whether “intellectuals” will step up as experts in the Multiple (with capital “M” to indicate a research object) or whether we will accompany their deterritorializing force by undermining, in the process, the pedagogical apparatuses that enthrone us in our position. The question is whether the capacity of these movements to de-institute well-established truths will be colonized as knowledge, used to pump up careers of new scholars, maybe even turned into academic departments or brandished, inside and outside institutions, as a weapon to severely wound the powers that threaten the desire to live beyond the mere survival to which we seem condemned. Politics as desire, as potentia, upsets the very definition of politics, the politics inscribed in a pedagogical regime. Critical thought can no longer be satisfied with unmasking the false. To unleash furious rage against the political correctness of politics is, today, an act of freedom.
Endnotes

1 Michael Chossudovsky, among other analysts, has argued that these allegations were complete fabrications.

2 The opening manifesto was republished in its entirety on Acontecimiento 21. This is the version I am using.

3 Malgré Tout and A pesar de todo mean “despite everything,” respectively in French and Spanish.

4 The reader may be familiar with the use of notions such as spectator and situation in the context of situationism. Malgré Tout, however, does not entirely use them in reference to this current of thought. To give a quick overview, the spectator refers to the general or global standpoint, the empty place of the point of view of God that remains in place after the modern demise of Christian metaphysics. The situation, on the other hand, is the changing and multiple set of relations that constitute the point of view brought into existence when metaphysics as such is overcome. The situation appears only after the suspension of the general viewpoint—the view of the totality as a knowable whole; as total ens, or “being” written in small case in most English translations of Heidegger. What the situation opens is a different ontology, in which being is defined in terms of power (potentia) that increases or diminishes in relation to its capacity to evaluate. The bibliography that elaborates this other ontology is vast. It includes names such as Spinoza, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Foucault, Deleuze and Badiou. For a concise discussion, see Heidegger’s “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God is Dead’”. I will return to the notion of the situation as subtraction from the general/global standpoint later at several points.


6 To keep that emphasis alive, from now on I will use the word potentia to designate this understanding of power. To this day, the distinction between the two concepts of power remains inspired in Spinoza’s use of the notions of potestas and potentia.

7 By saying “worker” I am already reducing the multiple existence of a person who has a job. Rancière has devoted several pages to the problem of “worker” as an identity, which he traces back to Plato (Philosopher 4).

8 Rancière argues that such a reading of Marx—that history is made by the capacity of the masses—has an origin in Maoism and the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The emphasis on capacity is necessary, because the point is not just that the masses make history, which may still invoke their courage in struggle but also their lack of vision to carry it out in the proper direction. “Mao’s thesis,” Rancière argues, “is that it is the oppressed who are intelligent and it is their intelligence wherefrom the weapons for liberation are born (see as an illustration the admirable stories gathered by Snow or Myrdal)” (Althusser 40). This capacity is evident not only in struggle. The use of science in capitalist production is possible because there is, first, a moment of appropriation of workers’ knowledge and inventiveness. Here Rancière’s argument is close to the reading of Marx in the tradition that stems from Italian workerism (Dyer-Witheford; Cleaver, Reading Capital Politically).

9 Deleuze and Guattari make a similar argument. Even when the flows of force sometimes burst into lines of flight or pour as quanta in molecular lines, rigid or molar lines always reappear. The authors cite studies of myth historians and ethnologists that show that “there has always been a State, quite perfect, quite complete” (A Thousand Plateaus 360). The function of the state is care; it prevents the threats of the war machine to dissolve it: “The concern of the State is to conserve” (357).


11 Michel Foucault pointed out the increasing intertwining of the social sciences with disciplinary normalization (Power/Knowledge 92-108). Recently, this argument has been developed further by
Maurizio Lazzarato, who argues that the social sciences “ignore the temporality of the event, unless the latter appears as an exception to neutralize, a danger to conjure, an always exceptional occasion to capture (the revolution). The time of the event, the time of invention, the time of the creation of the possibles must be limited and confined within rigorously established timelines and procedures” (Políticas del acontecimiento 88).

12 On the One and its realization in socialist and liberal theory see Lazzarato, Políticas del acontecimiento 56. The myth of the entrepreneurial individual, who thinks in the first person as if no determinations existed, and the humanist myth reinforce each other in the idea of progress and the teleological conception of history (Benasayag, Pensar la libertad 62).

13 In his later work with Guattari, Deleuze distinguishes between the plane of transcendence and the plane of immanence. The moral and ethical visions correspond, respectively, to these planes. The plane of transcendence is teleological and concerns the formation of subjects that are already given, like “the tree is given in the seed” (A Thousand Plateaus 266). The consistency of the plane of immanence is given by compositions between unformed particles defined by their movement and potencia for which there is no development that can be inferred.

14 Fernando Pessoa captures this notion of equality when he writes: “Yes, I do write verses, and the stone does not. / Yes, I do have ideas about the world, and the plant does not. / But it turns out that stones are not poets, they are stones; / And plants are just plants, and not thinkers. / For this reason, I can as much say that I am superior to them, / As I can say that I am inferior. / But I don’t say that: I say that the stone, “is a stone.” / And the plant, “is a plant”, / And I say of myself, ‘I am’. / And I don’t say anything else. What else should I say?” (156-57).

15 See the “Definitions of Affects” in Book III of Spinoza’s Ethics.

16 A more exhaustive genealogy of this concept has to look for traces of it in the Stoic-Megarian school of Greek philosophy (Benasayag, Pensar la libertad 29) and in Spinoza’s concept of the mode (Deleuze, Expressionism 191-214).

17 Deleuze and Guattari use the term haecceity to refer to the radical “thisness” of an event; it defines individuation in terms of relations of movement and rest of particles (A Thousand Plateaus 260-65).

18 On this double movement, see the discussion of becoming-minority in Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 291.

19 Subcomandante Marcos interprets free choice in liberal democracies in a conversation with Durito, the fictional beetle with Quixotic fantasies whom he usually talks in his narrations: “Durito says that all the multiple options being offered by Power conceal a trap. ‘Where there are many paths, and we’re presented with the chance to choose, something fundamental is forgotten: all those paths lead to the same place. And so, liberty consists not in choosing the destination, the pace, the speed and the company, but in merely choosing the path. The liberty which the Powerful are offering is, in fact, merely the liberty to choose who will walk representing us’, Durito says” (qtd. in Gloria Muñoz Ramírez, EZLN: El fuego y la palabra 241).

20 As we will see in the next chapter, overcoming distraction is fundamental to antipedagogical emancipation as exemplified in Rancière’s figure of the ignorant schoolmaster.

21 I will return to the question of communication vs. resonance on Chapter 4.

22 Citing a comment made by Jameson (original source not referenced), Zizek argues that “a true leftist is in a way much closer to today’s neo-conservative communitarian than he is to a liberal democrat: he fully endorses the conservative criticism of liberal democracy and agrees the conservative on practically everything except the essential, except a sometimes tiny feature which, none the less, changes everything” (20).

23 There is a danger, as Colectivo Situaciones suggest, in idealizing grassroots assemblies and horizontal practices as a political ideal. “We don’t think horizontalidad should be thought of as a new model, but rather horizontalidad implies that there are no models” (Colectivo Situaciones interviewed in Sitrin 55).
The critique of the notion that truth and thought can be conveyed through symbolic interaction alone goes back to Heidegger: "Communication is never anything like a conveying of experiences, such as opinions or wishes, from the interior of a subject into the interior of another" (Being and Time 205).

On this aspect of the Zapatista movement see Gloria Muñoz Ramirez and John Ross. On the Argentine movements, see MTD de Solano and Colectivo Situaciones, Hipótesis 891, and Colectivo Situaciones, MOCASE. See also Ch. 5 of this dissertation.

The incident occupied much of the front page of Argentinean newspapers. My description is based on Aejandra Dandan's coverage in Página/12.

Taller de los Sábados is a weekly workshop whose participants are teachers of both Comunidad Educativa Creciendo Juntos and School 105 and militant researchers of Colectivo Situaciones.

The motivations for revolt in modern schools are older than the elephant itself. In Lindsay Anderson’s cult film If... , for example, the visibility of discipline makes it difficult not to find explanations for the students’ reaction.

The individual becomes a citizen by becoming, first, a member of a people. A people becomes such—a multiplicity becomes One—through the multiple subjective experiences of understanding a common past. Many institutions are recruited for this task, from the school to the media, from public monuments to cenotaphs to soldiers fallen in battles that defined the character of the nation. The experience of a past and destiny in common is constructed in rituals that vary from patriotic celebrations to international sports competitions. On the phenomenology of the production of a people see Heidegger, Being and Time 434-39. On the rituals that produce the people see Anderson and Corea and Lewkowicz.

"Education" was first mentioned in French in 1498. The earliest record of this word in English is from 1530. In the Spanish-speaking world, the concept of “education” was not used until the 17th century (Illich, History of Needs 88-89).

See in particular the historical analyses by Bowles and Gintis and Carnoy.

In The Nights of Labor, Rancière tells the story of associations of manual workers in 1840s Paris who met at night to share their interest in poetry and philosophy. Their utopian engagements with education both contrast with and anticipate the view that workers need to be equipped with science to clearly view their interests.

In the last decades there has been an exodus of education away from the school, as a clearly defined space, attended at preestablished hours of a day, during a numbers of years of a lifetime, in which learners are forced to submit to hierarchically enforced discipline. The exodus is towards open and distributed forms, schools without walls, learning networks, education throughout the lifetime, and a society in which education becomes coextensive with life. See Touza, “Post-Fordist Reproduction and the Political Economy of Informal Learning.”

These expressions have been proposed, respectively, by Manuel Castells, Robert Reich, and Maurizio Lazzarato (“Immaterial Labor”).

Winner; Standish; Noble, “Digital Diploma Mills: Rehearsal for the Revolution;” Noble, “Digital Diploma Mills: The Automation of Higher education.” As imagined by former US Republican representative Newt Gingrich, “24-7 will be the world of the future. Customer access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, will become the standard of the future. ATMs symbolize this emerging customer convenience standard, providing cash to card-holders any day, round the clock. Yet today’s schools combine an agricultural-era nine- or ten-month school year (including the summer off for harvesting) with an industrial era 50-minute class, with a ‘foreman’ at the front of the room facing a class of ‘workers’ in a factory-style school day, in a Monday-to-Friday work week. Learning in the future will be embedded in the computer and on the Internet and will be available with a great deal of customization for each learner and on demand” (Gingrich 56).

Both Lewkowicz and Colectivo Situaciones use the Spanish word dispositivo. One meaning of this word is “mechanism,” but this meaning alone does not translate all the implications of this word when it is used
in the context of a discussion of power relations. Dispositivo also means a certain arrangement of the troops of an army in a field. The use of this word in Spanish to convey simultaneously these two meanings comes from the use given to the word dispositif by Michel Foucault, who, inverting von Clausewitz’s formula, believes that politics is the continuation of war by other means. For this reason, and because I assume an English-speaking reader of Foucault will be more familiar with the original word in French, I will use it in this language.

Still today liberal progressive thinkers, such as the supporters of the Democratic Party in the United States, sometimes express their expectation surrounding education when they blame the “redneks” of the Bible belt, typical Republican voters, for their appalling lack of understanding of democracy, expressed in their failure to endorse the rational ideas presented by learned leaders, preferring, instead, charismatic figures who even the learned among the conservative elites find repulsive.

A detailed historical consideration is beyond the scope of this work, but it is at least necessary to point out here that the rise of biopolitics is not an evolution in the forms of power. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, “politics on the grand scale can never administer its molar segments without also dealing with the micro-injections or infiltrations that work in its favor or present an obstacle to it; the larger the molar aggregates, the greater the molecularization of the agencies they put into play” (A Thousand Plateaus 204). The context of the formation of biopolitics is also the time of the formation of large molar aggregates such as the nation-states, which coincides with molecular phenomena such as the beginnings of the displacement of the peasantry to the cities, increasing urbanization, improved communications and migrations. This does not mean that micropolitics did not exist prior to biopolitics, but only that it had not achieved greater relevance given the units that could be counted as One at the moment.

Market societies do not naturally arise as the result of trade, but are rather the result of non-market forces: they presuppose the enclosure of the commons (De Angelis). Smooth functioning markets that come to colonize every single motivation have a past of expropriation and of enforcement of “bloody legislation against the expropriated” that is not always easy to hide (Marx, Capital V. I 873-904).

See in particular the work of Bowles and Gintis and Joel Spring.

The concept of police in Rancière is similar to the notion of state in Badiou, that is, the state as state of the situation, the count as One of the count as One or the representation of representation. For Badiou’s comparison of the two concepts see Metapolitics 119.

For an overview of the resistances against pedagogization enforced by progressive administrations in Latin America see Esteva and Prakash.

The critique of the ideology that combines under the same logic human rights, capitalist economy, parliamentary democracy, and individualism, embraced by many progressive intellectuals, is a major theme of Badiou’s Ethics. The cluster of convictions that support this logic include the notion of a general human subject that is also a passive victim, a conception that reduces politics to the judgment of indignant spectators that authorizes interventions in the name of the Good; the notion that the Good is established in relation (and subordinated) to Evil; and the negative definition of the Good as non-Evil. Politics, defined as “rebellion, ... radical dissatisfaction with the established order, and a fully committed engagement in the real of situations” not only repudiates the subordination of human rights to the state (Rancière’s ‘police’), but is also decidedly antihuman (7).

On the “third university,” see the work in progress of Universidad Experimental <http://www.catedrasubjetividad.com.ar>. See also Franco Ingrassia’s contribution to the Edu-Factory project.


Rancière argues that the category of habitus, as used by Bourdieu in his works on education, helps secure a representable identity of the working class: “Suppression of everything that could color or tatoo the simple face of working-class identity. Militant medicine of a habitus ‘without guilt or pain’ applied to preserve the simplicity of this ethos from all the swellings triggered by the demand—voluntary or
market—for bourgeois symbolic goods" (Rancière, *Philosopher* 197). Bowles and Gintis, working from the perspective of Marxist political economy, use categories similar to Bourdieu's.

47 Putting the will and desire at the centre—a Nietzschean, but also a Spinozan, theme—need not be a building block for the edifice of fascism. On the contrary, it is by not putting them at the centre that we forget that “even the most repressive and the most deadly forms of social reproduction are produced by desire” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 29). It is only by looking at desire that we can avoid the naïve constructions of propaganda models that argue that the German and Italian masses were innocent dupes. In fact, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, the masses "wanted fascism, and it is this perversity of the desire of the masses that needs to be accounted for" (29). Consensual democracy—postmodern fascism—also depends for its proper functioning on a certain mode of the will: Nietzsche would call it nihilism, the death of the will; or, as Spinoza would argue, the moment when our capacity to be affected is at its lowest point. Tyrannies—with or without general elections and multi-party systems—are not possible without sad men and women.

48 Deleuze and Guattari define language as “the set of all order-words” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 79). As a vehicle of inadequate ideas, language is neither informational nor communicational.

49 On ignorance and victimization see Cerletti.

50 The title of Rancière’s book in French, *Le maitre ignorant*, parodies the title of André Glucksman’s *Le maitre penseurs*, one of the first treatises of postmodern philosophy to argue that any emancipatory thought posited from the perspective of equality leads necessarily to the Soviet gulags. It thus advocated the defensive, victimizing “ethical” ideology, characteristic among French *nouveaux philosophes* of the 1970s and omnipresent today among liberal, social-democratic and post-communist parties, that, in the name of human rights, legitimates bombing countries, the spread of development and education, and more (Badiou, *Ethics* 13-7).

51 I will revisit Spinoza’s concept of common notions, essential for building the perspective of antipedagogy, in the next three chapters.

52 For Virno, the forms of subjectivity of post-Fordist society have led to the formation of a multitude or mass intellectuality whose capacity to mobilize cognitive capacities has thrown into question the value of asking about the division between intellectual and manual labour. The point I am making here is different. What post-Fordism has done is to reveal a commonality of attributes of intelligence that were already there, but were not perceivable because of the forms of police—distributions of hierarchies, places, functions, etc.—against which workers rebelled in the 1960s.

53 This conception of individual will has been of key importance to the Zapatista movement: “Each Zapatista insurgent is an autonomous municipality and does whatever s/he wants. And no resistance is greater than the one they oppose to obeying orders” (Subcomandante Marcos).

54 As Deleuze points out, overcoming chance encounters that only perpetuate the sad and fearful condition that characterize the state of nature requires a deliberate effort to form common notions (*Expressionism* 273-88). We will come back to this later.

55 The distinction between representation and expression can be found throughout Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*. See in particular chapter 11, “Of the Refrain.” Badiou, on the other hand, distinguishes between re-presentation and presentation (*Being and Event*).

56 Deleuze and Guattari discuss the relation between these three dimensions in *A Thousand Plateaus* (see in particular chapters 3 and 4). My reading of Spinoza’s theory of expression is inspired in Colectivo *Situaciones, 19 y 20*, chapter 6. Deleuze (*Expressionism*) has given numerous examples of combinations of elements that appear occupying the terms of the triad of expression throughout the work of Spinoza. The best known of them is perhaps the one constituted by the substance (the single substance that exists in everything) that expresses itself, the attributes of thought and extension through which the common substance expresses itself, and the finite modes that constitute that which is expressed: particular beings and the ideas we have of them. The three elements of expression happen at once, in an unfragmented form and not as a sequence in which the substance is the cause and the modes are the effect. The
substance exists both in the modes and as the modes. When Spinoza argued that the substance is in the modes, he did not mean that there is a piece of substance in each mode, but that the same substance is in each mode undivided. Each mode is an expression of the substance.

For instance, the conference Towards a Politics of Truth: The Retrieval of Lenin (in Essen, Germany, February, 2001), whose speakers included Fredric Jameson, Alain Badiou, Antonio Negri, and Slavoj Zizek, and the collection of essays What is to be Done? Leninism, anti-Leninist Marxism and the Question of Revolution today, edited by Werner Bonefeld and Sergio Tischler.

See also Fredric Jameson’s discussion in Marxism and Form.

In more than one sense, Lukács remains a fundamental thinker for a perspective of self-emancipation. As Holloway points out, Lukács’ is ambivalent regarding the Party question and sometimes presents his argument opening toward a radical self-emancipatory conception of politics without the party, in which knowledge of the totality is replaced by the weaker notion of ‘aspiration toward the totality’ (Holloway, Change the World 85-6; Lukács 175, 198).

One of the reasons why the Zapatistas use balaclavas, as Holloway points out, is to defy classification, or to affirm their non-identity. But indiscernible is not the same as invisible: “The struggle for visibility is also central to the current indigenous movement, expressed most forcefully in the Zapatista wearing the balaclava: we cover our face so that we can be seen, our struggle is the struggle of those without face” (Change the World 156). Another aspect of the Zapatista construction of their indiscernibility is their silence, as the EZLN and the Juntas del Buen Gobierno sometimes spend long periods of time without emitting communiques, often causing some distress among those trying to establish careers by studying them. “On the Zapatista silence see Colectivo Situaciones, “El silencio de los caracoles.”

See for example John Fiske, “Cultural Studies and the Culture of Everyday Life,” and Mike Featherstone, “City Cultures and Post-modern Lifestyles.”

For an extended discussion of the de-institution of the political common sense before, during, and after the revolt of December 2001 see Colectivo Situaciones, 19 y 20 and Lewkowicz, Sucesos Argentinos.

The concrete universal is similar in meaning to what Deleuze and Guattari (A Thousand Plateaus 382-3) call the local absolute: an experience of the absolute, of universality; an actual infinity different from the religious experience of the absolute, more akin to the global universality of the vision of the world as One situation. In this sense, capitalism secularizes the world by replacing religion in its global effect: “capitalism exists but as a permanent globalization-separation that has its materiality in concrete situations, under the form of the virtualization of life” (Benasayag and Sztulwark 221).

Gramsci, in turn, points out that idealist philosophy springs out of the myth of the autonomous intellectual (8).

This is not the case of thinkers for whom consciousness refers to the undivided awareness of mind and body, such as, for instance, Jean-Paul Sartre’s concept of non-the tic consciousness. In this sense, for Sartre, human beings do not have consciousness, we are consciousness: “the body is what this consciousness is; it is not even anything except the body. The rest is nothingness and silence” (Being and Nothingness 306). It is in this sense that Sartre conceives anguish, fear, hope, emotions, affectivity, etc. as constitutive of consciousness.

Two notable episodes of the repression included the Pueyrred6n bridge massacre of June 2002 and the eviction of the workers that had seized control of the Brukman factory. Several piquetero movements made peace with the new government and joined the ranks of the Peronist party. Some human rights organizations that had been hostile to every administration since the last dictatorship, such as Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, became supporters of the new administration that emerged from the 2003 elections. The production of consistencies that can be represented has been analyzed, among others, by Ignacio Lewkowicz and Colectivo Situaciones and continues to be debated to this day.

In a famous passage of Capital, Marx argued that the explanations of political economists that used the individual as the basis for their analyses supposed that all humanity lived as Robinson Crusoe.
The critique of the mobilization of life as a way of reducing life to survival is one of the directions in which Spanish philosopher Santiago López Petit is working at the moment (“En ese tren ibamos todos”).

In *Being and Event*, Badiou discusses the relation between the concept of number and the representation of the representative (223-231). The notion that the general will is unrepresentable originates, according to Badiou, in Rousseau (344-354). The notion of minority, when used to describe the constitution of a singularity, is not numerical. What defines a minority is not its number but its *becoming* minority (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 104-5, 247, 291-2, 470).

In particular the essays collected by Craig Calhoun in *Habermas and the Public Sphere* and Jurgen Habermas’ *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. The most in-depth argument on the ontological grounding of politics in communication remains Habermas’ *Theory of Communicative Action* (2 Vols.). For a sympathetic critique see Benhabib, Seyla. *Critique, Norm, and Utopia*.

As Raúl Cerdeiras argues, a premise for the role of the party as mediator has been the naturalization of a chain of representations: “the Party represents the proletariat; the proletariat is the class-subject that represents communism in class struggle in bourgeois society; the class struggle represents the social antagonism derived from the contradiction between (social) productive forces and (private) relations of production; these relations represent a given development of productive forces; the productive forces represent the material science of History (Historical Materialism); the laws of history represent, in human societies, the four laws of the dialectic; the laws of the dialectic (Dialectical Materialism) represent all that exists in the universe” (Cerdeiras, *Acontecimiento* 15 69-70).

See their “Carta a los no votantes” (letter to non-voters).

E.g. the critique of 501 by the editor of *Parte de Guerra*, an important countercultural magazine at the time (Cuervo 2).

The reconstruction of representative politics cannot be reduced to the sole action of calling for elections. Several other causes have to be considered. For instance, the devaluation of the Argentinean peso in February 2002 boosted the export sector and expanded state tax revenue, making possible the return of the client-patron machine of Peronist populism, perhaps the most effective weapon against the autonomous organization of the urban poor. Repression of the autonomous piquetero movements also played a major role the consolidation of the present status quo. See Colectivo Situaciones, “Causes and Happenstance” and “Aquel Diciembre.”

For a detailed analysis see Harry Cleaver’s “Marxian Categories, the Crisis of Capital and the Constitution of Social Subjectivity Today.”

However, as Colectivo Situaciones and Sandro Mezzadra point out, if one looks carefully at the direction of migratory flows, it becomes obvious that they still move fundamentally from poor to rich countries, keeping alive hierarchies and asymmetries that make the hypothesis of the end of the Third and First world distinction in *Empire* collapse (Mezzadra 19).

On separation as outcome of deterritorialization see Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 323-9. On how this affects local knowledges, see Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 83.

Deleuze and Guattari describe *escape* as a feature of schizophrenia. For the authors, schizophrenia refers not only to the disease but also to a limit encountered in capitalist societies as they destroy social codes. Schizophrenia can be converted into a revolutionary force if that which escapes causes an avalanche of escape in the process of escaping (*Anti-Oedipus* 315, 341). For example, wage-labour is an outcome of the tendency in capitalism to always increase the abstraction of labour, i.e.: the worker is more abstract, more decoded, than the serf. Schizophrenic decoding can be the source of revolutionary lines of escape when workers experience in their flesh the abstraction of the system, say in times of neoliberal structural adjustment and massive layoffs, and form organizations of the unemployed that can raise critical questions about whether the capitalist state in a representative democracy actually represents all the citizens.
79 See Negri's intervention in the European Social Forum 2003: "Multitude is first of all a class concept, then also a political concept. Insofar as it is a class concept, multitude puts an end to the concept of working class as a simplistic concept, as a mass concept" (Negri, "Multitude or Working Class").

80 This is not the place to go in detail over the content of these works. For an overview see Nick Dyer-Witheford and the essays collected in Amin.

81 Badiou points out that the word immigrant is used in this sense in France ("Politics and Philosophy" 103).

82 See, for instance, impetus of the conatus communicated in the following passage: "We, on the contrary, struggle because desire has no limit and (since the desire to exist and the desire to produce are one and the same thing) because life can be continuously, freely, and equally enjoyed and reproduced" (Empire 349).

83 This article, Negri's contribution to the conference on the anniversary of the publication of Lenin's What is to be Done? cited above (Chapter 3), was also published in the Italian journal Posse in May 2002.

84 See the discussion in of this in Deleuze, Expressionism 222.

85 Translation modified.

86 I have developed this point at greater length in "One Should not Bargain with Market Terrorism: On Being Immortal Amidst Precariousness."

87 See for example the RAND Corporation report Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy, by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt.

88 This line of criticism of biopolitics is being advanced by the Spanish philosopher Santiago López Petit. See for instance the issue dedicated to discuss his concept of desire to live in the journal Archipelago (N. 68, Nov, 2005), in particular the articles by Negri, Sztulwark, and López Petit himself.

89 I will define the concept of experiencia in the next chapter. It can refer to a group, a movement, an artist collective, or other forms of militant practice.

90 I borrowed the discussion of Socrates' ignorance from this document by Colectivo Situaciones.

91 This is not strictly ethology as practiced by natural scientists, whose "arborescent" limitations (i.e. its incapacity to be ethical enough) are described by Deleuze and Guattari (A Thousand Plateaus 328).

92 Let's remember that, for Spinoza, 'body' does not refer exclusively to the human body. Every thing has a body; even ideas have bodies. Common notions, in the sense I am using the concept here, refer more explicitly to human bodies.

93 English language literature on the Argentinean revolt includes Ana Dinerstein, "Beyond Insurrection: Argentina and New Internationalism;" Marina Sitrin Horizontalism; and Marcela López Levi, We are Millions. See also the translated articles in Colectivo Situaciones' website <www.situaciones.org>.

94 The Spanish language has retained from Latin the word potentia in its full meaning. The word and the concept are extensively used by Colectivo Situaciones and other groups.

95 For an account of the crisis of the left in Argentina in the early 1990s see Zibechi’s Genealogia de la revuelta.

96 See the first section of Chapter 1.

97 The word experiencia, as Colectivo Situaciones and other grassroots militants use it in Argentina has no literal English translation. It refers both to the experience of those engaged in a particular social practice and to the collective involved in such practice. I discuss this further in the section entitled “Experiencias of Counterpower.” See below.

98 See <www.tintalimonediciones.org> (accessed October 12, 2005).
The conversations taking place in some workshops co-organized by Colectivo Situaciones are well documented. See, for instance, the booklet El Taller del Maestro Ignorante (The Workshop of the Ignorant Master), which registers the collective reading and discussion of Rancière’s book The Ignorant Schoolmaster between Colectivo Situaciones and members of the MTD of Solano. The booklet differs from what could be the log of a reading group in that the transcriptions of interventions by the participants consists fundamentally on antipedagogical hypotheses elaborated on the basis of practical experience. The collective act of reading functions as organizer of the discussion. This particular workshop lasted for two years, meeting every two weeks.

On Universidad Trashumante see the book that this experiencia wrote together with Colectivo Situaciones, Universidad Trashumante: Territorios, Redes, Lenguajes.

Michel Foucault argued that “one could also question the meaning and functioning of propositions like ‘Bourbaki is so-and-so, so-and-so, etc.’” (“What Is an Author?” 107). Foucault was referring to the collective of twentieth-century French mathematicians that signed under the name Nicolas Bourbaki who, during the time they were active as a group, never revealed the proper names of the individuals that were part of it. Following this criterion, I have decided not to refer to proper names or individual biographies of the members of Colectivo Situaciones, with the exception of Diego Sztulwark, mentioned above, who should not be considered as having a leading role in the collective’s life.

There is a close affinity between Colectivo Situaciones’ concept of negation that opens becomings and John Holloway’s notion that thought and politics begin with a scream of refusal (Change the World 1-10).

ERP, FAR, FAP, and Montoneros were the largest guerrilla organizations in the 1970s in Argentina. MLN-Tupamaros was their peer in Uruguay, one of the most popular and sophisticated urban guerrillas of the 1960s and 1970s, turned into a grassroots movement in the late 1980s. By saying this I am making
a generalization that does not do justice to the differences. But this is not the place to analyze in depth the particularities of each of these groups.

108 On this sense of empiricism see Deleuze, Nietzsche 9. On pragmatism see Lazzarato, Políticas del acontecimient o 27-42.
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