Globalization and Democracy

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> *"And [Jesus] asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many [et interrogabat eum quod tibi nomen est et dicit ei Legio nomen mihi est quia multi sumus]"*
> *Mark 5:9*

The dominant modern notion of democracy has been intimately tied to the nation-state. To investigate the contemporary status of democracy, then, we should look first at the changing powers and role of the nation-state. Many theorists claim, and many others contest, that the diverse phenomena commonly grouped under the term "globalization" have eroded or even negated the powers of nation-states.[1] Too often, however, this is posed as an either/or proposition: either nation-states are still important or there is a new global order. Both, in fact, are true. The era of globalization has not brought the end of the nation-state – nation-states still fulfill extremely important functions in the establishment and regulation of economic, political, and cultural norms – but nation-states have indeed been displaced from the position of sovereign authority. A focus on the concept and practices of sovereignty helps to clarify this discussion.

We propose the concept of Empire to name our contemporary global arrangement. Empire refers above all to a new form of sovereignty that has succeeded the sovereignty of the nation-state, an unlimited form of sovereignty that knows no boundaries or, rather, knows only flexible, mobile boundaries. We borrow the concept of Empire from the ancient Roman figure in which Empire is seen to supercede the alternation of the three classical forms of government – monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy – by combining them in a single sovereign rule. Our contemporary Empire is indeed monarchical, and this is most apparent in times of military conflict when we can see the extent to which the Pentagon, with its atomic weapons and superior military technology, effectively rules the world. The supranational economic institutions, such as the WTO, the World Bank, and the IMF, also at times exercise a monarchical rule over global affairs. Our Empire, however, is also aristocratic, that is, ruled by a limited group of elite actors. The power of nation-states is central here because the few dominant nation-states manage to govern global economic and cultural flows through a kind of aristocratic rule. This aristocracy of nations is revealed clearly, for example, when the G8 nations meet or when the UN Security Council exercises its authority. The major transnational corporations too, in concert and in conflict, constitute a form of aristocracy. Finally, Empire is also democratic in the sense that it claims to represent the global people, although, as we will argue below, this claim to representation is largely illusory. The entire group of nation-states, the dominant and the subordinated ones together, fulfill the primary role here to the extent that they are assumed in some way to represent their peoples. The UN General Assembly is perhaps the most prominent symbol of this democracy of nations. When we recognize that nation-states do not in fact adequately represent their peoples, however, we can have recourse to nongovernmental organizations as the democratic or representative institutions. The functioning of the various different kinds of NGOs as democratic or representative mechanisms is a very complex and important question, which we should not pretend to treat adequately here. In short, Empire is a single sovereign subject that comprehends within its logic all three of these classical forms or levels of rule, the monarchic, the aristocratic, and the democratic. Empire, in other words, is a distinctive form of sovereignty for its ability to include and manage difference within its constitution.

From this perspective, we can see that the functions and authority of nation-states have not disappeared. It is probably more accurate to say that the primary functions of nation-states – the regulation of currencies, economic flows, population migrations, legal norms, cultural values, and so forth – have maintained their importance but been transformed through the contemporary processes of globalization. The radical qualitative shift should be recognized rather in terms of sovereignty. Nation-states can no longer claim the role of sovereign or ultimate authority as they could in the modern era. Empire now stands above the nation-states as the final authority and indeed presents a new form of sovereignty.

We should point out that this is a major historical shift only from the perspective of the dominant nation-states. The subordinate nations were never really sovereign. The entry into modernity for many nation-states was the entry into relations of economic and political subordination that undercut any sovereignty to which the nation might pretend. This shift in the form of sovereignty – from the modern sovereignty located in the nation-state to our postmodern imperial sovereignty – nonetheless effects us all. Even where national sovereignty was never a reality, the passage to Empire has transformed our forms of thought and the range of our political possibilities. In the light of Empire, we have to reconsider and reconceive all the key concepts of political philosophy.

Democracy Unrealized, Democracy Unrealizable

This brings us back, first and foremost, to the concept of democracy. The dominant modern notion of democracy was, as we claimed at the outset, based on representational institutions and structures within the bounded national space and dependent on national sovereignty.[2] What was represented in the democratic national institutions was the people, and hence modern national sovereignty tended to take the form of popular sovereignty. The claim that the nation was sovereign, in other words, tended to become identical to the claim that the people was sovereign. But what or who is the people? The people is not a natural or empirical entity; one cannot arrive at the identity of the people by summing up or even averaging the entire population. The people, rather, is a representation that creates of the population a unity. Three elements are centrally important here. First of all, the people is one, as Hobbes and the entire modern tradition often repeated. The people can be sovereign only as an identity, a unity. Second, the key to the construction of the people is representation. The empirical multiplicity of the population is made an identity through mechanisms of representation – and here we should include both the political and the aesthetic connotations of the term "representation". Finally, these mechanisms of representation are based on a notion and a condition of measure – and by measure here we mean not so much a quantifiable condition but rather a bounded one. A bounded or measured multiplicity can be represented as a unity, but the immeasurable, the boundless cannot be represented. This is one sense in which the notion of the people is intimately tied to the bounded national space. In short, the people is not an immediate nor an eternal identity, but rather the result of a complex process that is proper to a specific social formation and historical period.

We can simplify this complex situation for a moment and consider only the institutional, political mechanisms of representation, of which the electoral process was at least ideologically the most important. The notion of "one person, one vote", for example, was one of the ideals toward which the various modern schema of popular representation and sovereignty tended. There is no need for us to argue here that these schema [sic] of popular representation have always been imperfect and in fact largely illusory. There have long been important critiques of the mechanisms of popular representation in modern democratic societies. It is perhaps an exaggeration to characterize elections as an opportunity to choose which member of the ruling class will misrepresent the people for the next

two, four, or six years, but there is certainly some truth in it too and low voter turnout is undoubtedly a symptom of the crisis of popular representation through electoral institutions. We think that today, however, popular representation is undermined in a more basic and fundamental way.

In the passage to Empire, national space loses its definition, national boundaries (although still important) are relativized, and even national imaginaries are destabilized. As national sovereignty is displaced by the authority of the new supranational power, Empire, political reality loses its measure. In this situation, the impossibility of representing the people becomes increasingly clear and thus the concept of the people itself tends to evaporate.

From an institutional, political perspective, imperial sovereignty conflicts with and even negates any conception of popular sovereignty. Consider, for example, the functioning of the supranational economic institutions, such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO. To a large extent, the conditionality required by these institutions takes out of the hands of nation-states decisions over economic and social policy. The subordinate nation-states most visibly, but also the dominate ones, are subject to the rule of these institutions.[3] It is clear that these supranational economic institutions do not and cannot represent the people, except in the most distant and abstract sense – in the sense, for example, that some nation-states, which in some way represent their peoples, designate representatives to the institutions. If one looks for representation in such institutions, there will always inevitably remain a "democratic deficit". It is no accident, in our view, in other words, that these institutions are so isolated from popular representation. They function precisely to the extent that they elude mechanisms of popular representation.

Some of the best liberal Euro-American theorists of globalization do in fact argue that we need to reform the global system and reinforce the mechanisms of democratic political rule, but even they do not imagine that such supranational institutions could ever become representative in any popular sense. One of the fundamental obstacles is the problem of determining what or who is the people in such a conception. One would presumably have to develop a notion of the global people that extends beyond any national or ethnic conception to unite the entirety of humanity. Robert Keohane, for example, one of the leading theorists of global democratic reform, finds absurd the notion of a democratization of the supranational institutions in the representational, popular form of „one person, one vote". If that were the case, he reasons, the Chinese and the Indians would overwhelm us![4]

What then does constitute democratic reform in the views of the various leading liberal reformers such as Robert Keohane, Joseph Stiglitz, David Held, Richard Falk, and Ulrick Beck? It is striking in fact how widespread is the use of the term "democracy" in this literature and how universally accepted it is as a goal. One major component of democratic reform is simply greater transparency – Glasnost and Perestroika, perhaps we should understand this as a Gorbachev project for the age of globalization. Transparency itself, however, is not democracy and does not constitute representation.[5] A more substantive notion, which is omnipresent in the literature, is "accountability" (which is often paired with the notion "governance"). The concept of accountability could refer to mechanisms of popular representation, but it does not in these discourses. One has to ask "accountable to whom?" and then we find that the reformers do not propose making global institutions accountable to a global (or even a national) people – the people, precisely, is missing.

Rather, the reform would involve making the global institutions accountable to other institutions and especially to a community of experts. If the IMF were more transparent and accountable to economic experts, for example, there would be safeguards against its implementing disastrous policies, such as those dictated by the IMF in Southeast Asia in the late 1990s. What is central and most interesting about the use of the terms "accountability" and "governance" in these discussions, however, is that

these terms straddle so comfortably the political and the economic realms. Accountability and governance have long been central concepts in the theoretical vocabulary of capitalist corporations.[6] The notions of accountability and governance seem to be directed most clearly at assuring economic efficiency and stability, not at constructing any popular or representational form of democratic control. Finally, although the term "democracy" is omnipresent in the literature, no global version of democracy in its modern liberal form – that is, as popular representation – is even on the agenda. It seems, in fact, that the greatest conceptual obstacle that prevents these theorists from imagining a global representative schema is precisely the notion of the people. Who is the global people? It seems impossible today to grasp the people as a political subject and moreover to represent it institutionally.[7]

We have thought it important to dwell so long on the question of the democratic reform of these institutions not only to take seriously the arguments of the reformist theorists but also, and more importantly, because this discourse can be found so widely among various factions of the protest movements against the WTO, the World Bank, and the IMF. Groups call for greater inclusion and representation in the decision-making process of the institutions themselves, demanding, for example, trade union representation or NGO representation or the like. Such demands may have some positive results, but they ultimately face insurmountable obstacles. Our argument casts all this on a much more general plane. If we conceive democracy in terms of a sovereign authority that is representative of the people, then democracy in the imperial age is not only unrealized but actually unrealizable.

Democracy of the Multitude

We thus have to explore new forms of democracy, forms that are nonrepresentative or differently representative, to discover a democracy that is adequate to our own times. We have already argued that the modern notion of democracy is intimately tied to national sovereignty and a fixed national space, that the modern notion, in short, is founded on measure. Now we should turn our attention back to explore further the other element in the equation, the people. The people, as we said earlier, is a product of representation. In modern political theory, the people is most strongly configured as the product of the founding contractual act of bourgeois society, as all the modern liberal theorists explain, from Hobbes to Rawls. The contract makes of the population a united social body. This contractual act, however, is nonexistent, mystificatory, and outdated. The contract is nonexistent in the sense that no anthropological or historical fact allows us to assume its reality; rather, the contract negates any memory of its foundation, and this is certainly part of its violence, its fundamental denial of difference. The contract is mystificatory, secondly, in the sense that the people it constructs is presented as equal when the subjects that form it are in fact unequal; the concepts of justice and legitimacy that ground it serve only the strongest, who exercise a force of domination and exploitation on the rest of the population. This concept of a people formed through the contract is outdated, finally, because it looks to a society forged by capital: contractualism, people, and capitalism function in fact to make of the plurality a unity, to make of differences an homologous totality, to make of the wealth of all the singular lives of the population the poverty of some and the power of others. But this no longer works: it used to work as long as labor, needs, and desires were so miserable that they received the command of capital as a welcome comfort and a source of security when faced with the risks of the construction of value, the liberation of the imagination, and the organization of society. Today, however, the terms have changed. It is rather our monstrous intelligence and our cooperative power that are put in play: we are a multitude of powerful subjects, a multitude of intelligent monsters.

We thus need to shift our conceptual focus from the people to the multitude. The multitude cannot be grasped in the terms of contractualism – and in general in the terms of transcendental philosophy. In the most general sense, the multitude defies representation because it is a multiplicity, unbounded and immeasurable. The people is represented as a unity but the multitude is not representable because it is monstrous in the face of the teleological and transcendental rationalisms of modernity. In contrast to the concept of the people, the concept of the multitude is a singular multiplicity, a concrete universal. The people constituted a social body but the multitude does not – the multitude is the flesh of life. If on one side we contrast the multitude with the people, on the other side we should contrast it with the masses or the mob. The masses and the mob are most often used to name an irrational and passive social force, dangerous and violent precisely because so easily manipulated. The multitude, in contrast, is an active social agent – a multiplicity that acts. The multitude is not a unity, as is the people, but, in contrast to the masses and the mob, we can see that it is organized. It is an active, self-organizing agent. One great advantage of the concept of the multitude is that it displaces all the modern arguments based on the fear of the masses and even those about the tyranny of the majority, which have so often served as a kind of blackmail to force us to accept and even call for our own domination.

From the perspective of power, however, what can be done with the multitude? In effect, there is nothing to do with it, because the nexus among the unity of the subject (people), the form of its composition (contract among individuals), and the mode of government (monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, separate or combined) has been blown apart. The radical modification of the mode of production through the hegemony of immaterial labor-power and cooperative living labor – this ontological, productive, biopolitical revolution – has overturned the parameters of "good government" and destroyed the modern idea of a community that functions for capitalist accumulation, as capitalism imagined it from the beginning.

Allow us a brief parenthesis. Between the 15th and 16th centuries, when modernity appeared in the form of a revolution, the revolutionaries imagined themselves as monsters. Gargantua and Pantagruel can serve as emblems for all the giants and extreme figures of freedom and invention that have come down to us through the ages and proposed the gigantic task of becoming more free. Today we need new giants and new monsters that bring together nature and history, labor and politics, art and invention to demonstrate the new power that the birth of "general intellect", the hegemony of immaterial labor, the new passions of the abstract activity of the multitude provide to humanity. We need a new Rabelais or, really, several.

Spinoza and Marx spoke of the democracy of the multitude or, rather, a form of democracy that no longer has anything to do with the democracy that, along with monarchy and aristocracy, comprise the classical forms of government. The democracy that Spinoza advocates is what he calls an absolute democracy – absolute in the sense of being unbounded and immeasurable. The conceptions of social contracts and bounded social bodies are thus completely cast aside. When we say that absolute democracy is outside of the theory (and the mystificatory practice) of the classical forms of government, we mean also, obviously, that any attempt to realize democracy through the reform of the imperial institutions will be vain and useless. We mean, furthermore, that the only path to realize a democracy of the multitude is the path of revolution. What does it mean, however, to call for a revolutionary democracy adequate to the imperial world? Up to this point, we have simply focused on what it is not. It is no longer something that depends on the concept of nation (on the contrary, it is increasingly defined by the struggle against the nation). We have also seen that it is something that

does not correspond to the concept of the people and in fact is opposed to any attempt to present as unitary what is different. We need at this point to look to other concepts to help us understand a democracy of the multitude. The concept of counterpower seems fundamental to us when we deal with these new contents of the absolute democracy of the multitude.

Modern Counterpower and the Paradoxes of Modern Insurrection

The concept of counterpower consists primarily of three elements: resistance, insurrection, and constituent power. It is important to recognize, however, that, like the dominant concept of democracy, the dominant concept of counterpower was defined in modernity by the national space and national sovereignty. The effect was that during the modern era – at least since the French Revolution and throughout the long phase of socialist and communist agitation – the three elements of the concept of counterpower (resistance, insurrection, and constituent power) tended to be viewed as external to one another, and thus functioned as different strategies or at least different historical moments of revolutionary strategy. Once the elements were thus divided, the entire concept of counterpower tended to be reduced to one of its elements, the concept of insurrection or, really, civil war. Lenin's political thought is exemplary in this regard. For Lenin, counterpower – that is, in his terms, the dualism of power that consisted of the rise of a proletarian power against the bourgeoisie – could only exist for a very brief period, precisely in the period of insurrection. Resistance, which for Lenin principally took the form of syndicalist wage struggles, had an important political role but it was fundamentally separate from the revolutionary process. Constituent power too tended to disappear in Lenin's vision because every advance of constituent power immediately became an element of the new state, that is transformed into a new constituted power. What remained of the revolutionary concept of counterpower for Lenin was thus primarily the great force of insurrection or, really, civil war against the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

Once we recognize how the modern notion of counterpower was reduced to insurrection, we should look more closely at the conditions and fortunes of modern insurrection. Paradoxically and tragically, even when the modern communist insurrection managed to win, it really lost because it was immediately imprisoned in an alternation between national and international war. Finally it becomes clear that national insurrection was really an illusion.

The Parisian Communards set the model in 1871 for all modern communist insurrection. Their example taught that the winning strategy was to transform international war into civil war – national, interclass war. International war was the condition of possibility for launching insurrection. The Prussians at the gates of Paris not only toppled the Second Empire of Louis Bonaparte, but also made possible the overthrow of Thiers and the Republic. Paris armed is revolution armed! Forty years later, the Bolsheviks too needed the inter-European war, that is, World War I, as the condition of insurrection. And once again the Germans, the national enemy, acted as condition of possibility. The Bolsheviks too transformed international war into civil war.

The tragedy of modern insurrection, however, is that national civil war is immediately and ineluctably transformed back into international war – or, really, a defensive war against the united international bourgeoisie. A properly national, civil war is really not possible insofar as a national victory only gives rise to a new and permanent international war. Therefore, exactly the same condition that makes possible the national communist insurrection – that is, international war – is what imprisons the victorious insurrection or, rather, distorts it into a permanent military regime. The Parisian Communards were caught in this double bind. Marx saw clearly the mistakes of the Commune but did not show

that the other options open to them would have equally been mistakes. The choice was either give all power to the Central Committee and march on the bourgeois army at Versailles – that is, become a military regime – or be defeated and massacred.

It would not have ended with a victory at Versailles, either. The Prussian and the English ruling classes would not have allowed that. The victory of the Commune would have been the beginning of an unending international war. The Soviet victory only confirmed that double bind. The military victory in Russia, the complete defeat of the national bourgeoisie, only opened an international war (hot and then cold) that lasted for over seventy years.

Insurrection during the cold war operated under the same structure, but only refined the model, reducing international war to its essential form. The cold war fixed the conditions of modern insurrection into a permanent state. On one hand, there was a permanent state of international war that was already coded in class terms. The representational structure of the two opposing powers forced its coding on all new movements. The alternative was also determining in material terms, since an insurrectionary movement could solicit the aid of one of the superpowers or play them off against one another. The formula for national insurrection was ready-made. But also ready-made and ineluctable were the limits of national insurrection. No movement could escape the great cold war alternative. Even insurrectionary movements that did not conceive of themselves primarily in class terms – anticolonial movements in Asia and Africa, antidictatorial movements in Latin America, black power movements in the US – were inevitably forced to be represented on one side of the great struggle. National insurrection during the cold war was ultimately illusory. The victorious insurrection and the revolutionary nation were finally only pawns in the great cold war chess game.

The contemporary relevance that emerges from this brief history of modern insurrection centers around two facts or, really, one fact with two faces. On one side today, with the decline of national sovereignty and the passage to Empire, gone are the conditions that allowed modern insurrection to be thought and at times to be practiced. Today it thus seems almost impossible even to think insurrection. On the other side, however, what is gone is also exactly the condition that kept modern insurrection imprisoned in the interminable play between national and international wars. Today, therefore, when considering the question of insurrection, we are faced with both a great difficulty and an enormous possibility. Let us move back, however, to the more general consideration of counterpower.

A Counterpower of Monstrous Flesh

With the contemporary decline of the sovereignty of the nation-state, it is possible once again to explore the concept of counterpower in its full form and return to its conceptual foundation. Today the relationship among resistance, insurrection, and constituent power has the possibility to be an absolutely continuous relationship, and in each of these moments there is the possibility of the expression of the power of invention. In other words, each of the three moments – resistance, insurrection, and constituent power – can be internal to one another, forming a common means of political expression. The context in which – and against which – this counterpower acts is no longer the limited sovereignty of the nation-state but the unlimited sovereignty of Empire, and thus counterpower too must be reconceived in an unlimited or unbounded way.

Here we are faced with a new imposing and exciting theoretical and political problematic. In our present imperial context, we need to rethink the concepts of resistance, insurrection, and constituent power – and rethink too their internal connections, that is, their unity in the concept and practice of

counterpower. When we look across the field of contemporary theoretical production, we can see that we do already have some tools to work with on this terrain. Certainly, Foucault's development of the concept of resistance along with all the work that has followed on his, James Scott's notion of the "weapons of the weak", and all the other work that has emerged on micropolitical resistance should be a foundation for any investigation into this problematic. The great limitation of all this work, however, is that it never manages to discover the internal connection that resistance can have with insurrection and constituent power. Resistance can be a powerful political weapon, in other words, but isolated, individual acts of resistance can never succeed in transforming the structures of power.[8] Today, however, the other two components of counterpower remain completely undeveloped. An insurrection is a collective gesture of revolt, but what are the terms for insurrection today and how can it be put into practice? It should be clear that we can no longer translate insurrection immediately into civil war, as was so common in the modern era, if by "civil" we mean a war within the national space. Insurrection is indeed still a war of the dominated against the rulers within a single society, but that society now tends to be an unlimited global society, imperial society as a whole. How is such an insurrection against Empire to be put into practice? Who can enact it? Where is the internal connection between the micropolitics of resistance and imperial insurrection? And how can we today conceive of constituent power, that is, the common invention of a new social and political constitution? Finally, we need to think resistance, insurrection, and constituent power as one indivisible process, the three forged together into a full counterpower and ultimately a new alternative social formation. These are enormous questions and we are only at the very first stages of addressing them.

Rather than confronting them directly, it seems better to us to shift registers and take a different view on the entire problematic. We have to find some way to shake off the shackles of reasonableness, to break out of the common forms of thinking about democracy and society, to create more imaginative and inventive perspectives. Let us begin by looking at the most basic foundation of counterpower where its three elements – resistance, insurrection, and constituent power – most intimately correspond. The primary material of counterpower is the flesh, the common living substance in which the corporeal and the intellectual coincide and are indistinguishable. "The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance", Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes. "To designate it, we should need the old term 'element,' in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a general thing … a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being. The flesh is in this sense an 'element' of Being."[9] The flesh is pure potentiality, the unformed stuff of life, an element of being. One should be careful, however, not to confuse the flesh with any notion of naked life, which conceives of a living form stripped of all its qualities, a negative limit of life.[10] The flesh is oriented in the other direction, toward the fullness of life. We do not remain flesh, flesh is but an element of being; we continually make of our flesh a form of life.

In the development of forms of life, we discover ourselves as a multitude of bodies and at the same time we recognize that every body is itself a multitude – of molecules, desires, forms of life, inventions. Within each of us resides a legion of demons or, perhaps, of angels – this is the basic foundation, the degree zero of the multitude. What acts on the flesh and gives it form are the powers of invention, those powers that work through singularities to weave together hybridizations of space and metamorphoses of nature – the powers, in short, that modify the modes and forms of existence.

In this context it is clear that the three elements of counterpower (resistance, insurrection, and constituent power) spring forth together from every singularity and from every movement of bodies that constitute the multitude. Acts of resistance, collective gestures of revolt, and the common invention of a new social and political constitution pass together through innumerable micropolitical circuits – and thus in the flesh of the multitude is inscribed a new power, a counterpower, a living thing that is against Empire. Here are born the new barbarians, monsters, and beautiful giants that continually

emerge from within the interstices of imperial power and against imperial power itself. The power of invention is monstrous because it is excessive. Every true act of invention, every act, that is, that does not simply reproduce the norm is monstrous. Counterpower is an excessive, overflowing force, and one day it will be unbounded and immeasurable. This tension between the overflowing and the unbounded is where the monstrous characteristics of the flesh and counterpower take on a heightened importance. As we are waiting for a full epiphany of the (resistant, revolting, and constituent) monsters, there grows a recognition that the imperial system, that is, the contemporary form of repression of the will to power of the multitude, is at this point on the ropes, at the margins, precarious, continually plagued by crisis. (Here is where the weak philosophies of the margin, difference, and nakedness appear as the mystifying figures and the unhappy consciousness of imperial hegemony.)

Against this, the power of invention (or, really, counterpower) makes common bodies out of the flesh. These bodies share nothing with the huge animals that Hobbes and the other theorists of the modern state imagined when they made of the Leviathan the sacred instrument, the pitbull of the appropriative bourgeoisie. The multitude we are dealing with today is instead a multiplicity of bodies, each of which is crisscrossed by intellectual and material powers of reason and affect; they are cyborg bodies that move freely without regard to the old boundaries that separated the human from the machinic. These multiple bodies of the multitude enact a continuous invention of new forms of life, new languages, new intellectual and ethical powers. The bodies of the multitude are monstrous, irrecuperable in the capitalist logic that tries continually to control it in the organization of Empire. The bodies of the multitude, finally, are queer bodies that are insusceptible to the forces of discipline and normalization but sensitive only to their own powers of invention.

When we point to the powers of invention as the key to a formation of counterpower in the age of Empire, we do not mean to refer to some exclusive population of artists or philosophers. In the political economy of Empire, the power of invention has become the general and common condition of production. This is what we mean when we claim that immaterial labor and general intellect have come to occupy a dominant position in the capitalist economy.

If, as we have argued, the dominant form of democracy that modernity and European history has bequeathed us – popular, representational democracy – is not only unrealized but actually unrealizable, then one should not view our proposition of an alternative democracy of the multitude as a utopian dream. The unrealizability of the old notion of democracy should, rather, force us to move forward. This also means that we are entirely within and completely against imperial domination, and there is no dialectical path possible. The only invention that now remains for us is the invention of a new democracy, an absolute democracy, unbounded, immeasurable. A democracy of powerful multitudes, not only of equal individuals but of powers equally open to cooperation, to communication, to creation. Here there are no programs to propose – and who would dare still today do such a thing after the 20th century has ended? All the modern protagonists – the priests, the journalists, the preachers, the politicians – may still be of use to imperial power, but not to us. The philosophical and artistic elements in all of us, the practices of working on the flesh and dealing with its irreducible multiplicities, the powers of unbounded invention – these are the leading characteristics of the multitude. Beyond our unrealized democracy, there is a desire for a common life that needs to be realized. We can perhaps, mingling together the flesh and the intellect of the multitude, generate a new youth of humanity through an enormous enterprise of love.

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References

1 The most detailed and influential argument that globalization has not undermined the powers of nation-states and that globalization is in this sense a myth is presented by Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, Globalization in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 1999).

2 This is the fundamental argument of David Held, Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

3 Many authors characterize and lament this shift in decision making from national to supranational institutions as the increasing domination of the economic over the political (with the assumption that the nation-state is the only context in which to conduct politics). Several of these authors invoke the work of Karl Polanyi in the argument to re-embed economic markets within social markets. See, for example, James H. Mittleman, The Globalization Syndrome: Transformation and Resistance (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), and John Gray, False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism (New York: The New Press, 1998). In our view, it is a mistake to separate the economic and the political in this way and to insist on the autonomy of the political. The supranational economic institutions are also themselves political institutions. The fundamental difference is that these institutions do not allow for (even the pretense of) popular representation.

4 Public discussion at Duke University, October 25, 2000.

5 Joseph Stiglitz, formerly the chief economist of the World Bank, claims that "transparency and public discussion provide a peculiar kind of democracy" („Globalization and Its Discontents," public lecture at Duke University, March 27, 2001).

6 We are indebted to Craig Borowiak for his analyses of the concept of accountability in the contemporary globalization discussion.

7 From this perspective, the project for the construction of a political Europe can appear to some as the solution to the puzzle of democracy in the age of globalization. The hypothesis is that the continent can substitute for the nation and revive the mechanisms of representational democracy. This seems to us, however, a false solution. Even if one could represent institutionally the European people as a coherent subject, a political Europe is not capable of claiming sovereign authority. Regional powers, like nation-states, are merely elements that function within the ultimate sovereignty of Empire.

8 From our perspective, Félix Guattari, especially in his work with Gilles Deleuze, is the one who has gone furthest to push the notion of resistance toward a conception of molecular revolution.

9 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 139. Consider also Antonin Artaud's conception of the flesh: „There are intellectual cries, cries born of the subtlety of the marrow. That is what I mean by Flesh. I do not separate my thought from my life. With each vibration of my tongue I retrace all the pathways of my thought in my flesh" („Situation of the Flesh," in Selected Writings, ed. Susan Sontag, trans. Helen Weaver [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988], p. 110).

10 See Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).