Violence and Other Unpolitical Acts in the New Cycle of Protests

Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen

For us, ultimately, violence is *what has been taken from us*, and today we need to take it back.[1]
Tiqqun, *Introduction to Civil War*

Within three decades they [the Social Democrats] managed virtually to erase the name of Blanqui, though it had been the rallying sound that had reverberated through the preceding century.[2]
Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"

It is now becoming generally accepted that demonstrations, marches, spectacles and shows don't lead anywhere… . The methods of struggle therefore must be put through analysis because they present an obstacle to the creation of new modes of action.[3]
Jacques Camatte, "Against Domestication"

After a 30-year long period of one-sided neoliberal counter-revolution, the last ten years have been characterized by the return of universal disgust against the political status quo. Social movements, assemblies, occupations, multitudes, uprisings, riots, and revolts have moved discontinuously across a world united in distrust or outright hatred toward a corrupt political class. Millions of people have taken to the streets, occupying squares, or rioting to protest the austerity and corruption of local political regimes. Most of these protests have been directed at the state, not the economy; it has been the state's crisis management that has been the object of resentment and critique. People are disobeying and rejecting the state and its exercise of power. The threat of a situation of "double power" forces the state to react, and in most places, from Egypt to Hong Kong to France, the state has responded aggressively. France is a good example as the police repression of the *Gilets jaunes* movement has brought back memories of the repression during the Algerian Civil War. Questions of the monopoly of violence and the state's ability to exempt itself are back on the agenda.

In this chapter, I will discuss two books: Judith Butler's *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assemblies* and Marcello Tarì's *Non esiste la rivoluzione infelice: Il comunismo della destituzione*. Both analyze the new protest movements that have appeared since the 2008 financial breakdown: the Arab revolts, the protests in Greece between 2008 and 2012, Occupy in the US, the Spanish *Indignados*, the London Riots of 2011, the Brazilian anti-fare-hike movement, the Chilean student strikes, the Hong Kong democracy movement, and the wave of riots and protests in France from *Nuit debout* to Gilets jaunes. Both books excel in that they expand the understanding of politics to include political-aesthetic acts that are often dismissed as unpolitical. I will focus on the question of violence and, following Tarì, argue that it is important to let go of "democratistic" ideas of

nonviolent protest. The chapter is a modest contribution to the development of a new revolutionary imaginary emerging after four decades of defeat and dispersion that followed the ebb of the upsurge of 1968–1977.

I put bits and pieces from a ruined and broken revolutionary tradition to use when analyzing Butler and Tarí, not least concepts from the Situationist International and related parts of the revolutionary tradition. This includes the critique of the specialized identities of capitalist society, the way capitalist society splits life into different spheres and activities such as art or politics. From Marx onward, this separation was critiqued, not least by groups that sought to use art as a "heavy-handed" vehicle for a communist critique of capitalist society. It was not a question of realizing art for a group like the Situationists; it was a question of satisfying the authentic needs that art was the historical and reified expression of, i.e., the goal was to bring about the aesthetic transformation of the whole society. Any serious discussion of art, aesthetics, and politics has to take that into account.[4]

Violence and Politics

The question of the use of violence in the various protests we have seen emerge since 2010 and 2011 is central in political discourse. Whether it is in France where Macron and his government talk about a "violent Black Block" hijacking the Gilets jaunes demonstrations or in Hong Kong where the Chinese Communist Party has called demonstrators "brazen, violent, and criminal actors," there is a long tradition of dismissing acts of protest that do not follow the traditional lines of politics.[5] States rarely use the term "violence" when carrying out legal acts of coercion. In the language of the state, "violence" is committed by "criminals" or

"perpetrators"—never by the state. The state, thus, conceals its own use of violence with legislative rhetoric.

When confronted with blockades in the streets of Buenos Aires in 2003, the then-president Néstor Kirchner stated: "Voting is the only concrete and legitimate way of living together that a country and modern, progressive democracies can have."[6] Kirchner's statement sums up a common view on politics as dialogue and debate with a view to casting one's vote in an election. Of course, most social scientists and historians agree that politics includes strikes and demonstrations, blockades or picket lines. However, many also agree on excluding more violent events such as acts of sabotage or riots. When people rioted in London in 2011, several left-wing critics bemoaned the lack of politics exhibited in the riots; in their view, the looting and rioting were an expression of an erosion of politics. David Harvey dismissively wrote that capitalism should be put on trial for its crimes, but "this is what these mindless rioters cannot see or demand."[7]

Bodies Assembling

In her 2015 book, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assemblies*, Judith Butler engages in an analysis of the 2011 square occupation movement that included the collective takeover of squares and public places such as Tahrir in Cairo, Gezi Park in Istanbul, Hong Kong Central in Hong Kong, and Zuccotti Park in New York, among many others.[8] The initial explosion of occupations may have waned within a year or two—many commentators and reviewers noted as much when Butler's book appeared in November 2015. However, we need only to look at the recent events in Hong Kong, where millions of people are protesting against both the local government and the Chinese Communist Party, and Paris, where the Gilets jaunes movement

took over from the Nuit debout movement, in order to cast aside quick dismissals and depressed laments of the disappearance of the so-called square occupation movement. People are still taking to the streets, occupying public places, and showing their discontent with the established system.

Although we need to be cautious about positing any kind of straight forward socio-economic causality between crisis and protest, it is evident that the new wave of protests is related to the financial crisis and a longer history of economic development. The financial crisis of 2007 and 2008 revealed the brutal consequences of global capitalism's forty-year slow crash landing, whereby the one percent has amassed wealth while simultaneously saving on social reproduction. The crisis was already there, but the burst bubbles exposed the enormity of the problems haunting the capitalist economies in the West—problems that have been contracting for four decades.[9] Nothing indicates that protests and occupations will abate in the coming years.

Butler's book is a contribution to the analysis of the emergence of the new protest movement and its preferred mode of operation, the occupation. Butler sets forth what she calls a provisional "theory of the assemblies," arguing that the plural practice of assembling gives rise to expressions of the popular will outside of the formal institutions of the political system effectively contesting the system's claims to be democratic. Butler shows how, "by assembling," the square occupations reclaim public space against privatizing strategies of depoliticization. Depoliticization is, thus, opposed "through bodily movement, assembly, action and resistance," what Butler proposes to call "popular sovereignty" or "we, the people."[10] In this way, Butler puts her own theory of performativity to use showing how the assemblies enact a particular form of "we, the people" "breaking off from established power," contesting their condition of precarity and proclaiming that the assembled mass is, in fact, part

of, or indeed is, the people. The assembled people act collectively in a political-aesthetic gesture to defy domination.

Nonviolence

Throughout her analysis, Butler is at pains to describe the protests but also other acts of collective defiance as "nonviolent." The square occupations of 2011 were characterized by nonviolence, writes Butler.[11] Indeed, going from empirical analysis to theory, she suggests that "assemblies ... can succeed only if they subscribe to principles of nonviolence."[12] Butler's analysis is somewhat surprising insofar as many, if not all, of the occupations were characterized by very powerful physical acts of violence where protesters fought back against the police or sought to take over squares and important urban sites. This was perhaps most clear in Egypt and Tunisia. In Tahrir and other cities in Egypt, for instance, protesters not only fought the police and Mubarak's security forces—throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at them and driving large improvised vehicles into the lines of police officers—but also set fire to a large number of police stations and courthouses. To describe these acts as nonviolent is problematic.

The enormous mass of people assembled at Tahrir Square in the middle of Cairo not only cooked, discussed, and slept but also barricaded the square, fought back against the police, and destroyed property and official buildings. Of course, the protesters did not have the same equipment at their disposal as the police or Mubarak's security forces, but they made use of what they had to great effect and beyond considerations of violence or nonviolence. As the Egyptian film director Philip Rizk put it: "Despite the glorification of an eighteen-day revolution as non-violent, violence has been a part of this revolution since the

first stone was thrown on 25 January 2011 – followed three days later by the torching of police stations on the Friday of Rage – and until today [April 2013]."[13]

Butler's strange appropriation of violent protests as nonviolent points to her description of the square occupations as "democratic struggles." As Rizk writes, however, it was not a question of democracy, as Butler argues. The mass of protesters occupying Tahrir Square was contesting not only the local lumpen dictatorship of Mubarak but also the entire neocolonial model, whereby "foreign powers maintain their economic interest in a country by partnering with a local elite as proxy rulers."[14] In other words, it was not just a "political" protest—a demand for democracy—but also and primarily a revolutionary attack on the political-economic reality of neocolonialism. By analyzing the occupation of Tahrir Square through the lens of political sovereignty and democracy and by describing the occupation of Tahrir as nonviolent, Butler ends up subscribing to the dominant Western reception of the so-called "Arab Spring," according to which the protesters wanted "democratic transition" and "political reforms."[15] The attempt to clean up the protests and present them, contrary to all evidence, as nonviolent democratic protests is a desperate late-Orientalist attempt to transform the overthrow of pro-Western regimes into victories for the West and its "democratic values."

The description of the protests as nonviolent also risks playing into the hands of the local powers. As Egyptian journalist Abdel-Rahman Hussein writes in "Was the Egyptian Revolution Really Non-Violent?", throughout the protests, the authorities in Egypt described any act of non-state violence as paid thuggery or petty criminality and tried to contain and derail the protests by cracking down on radical elements while giving in to more modest demands.[16] By limiting the revolutionary anticolonial fight to a question of democracy, Butler is dangerously close

to mimicking a Western ideology of limited regime change or "democratic transition."

The Democratic Ideology of Nonviolence

The description of the events in Cairo as nonviolent raises questions about the political theoretical framework of Butler's analysis and theory. As the critical theorist and communist poet Joshua Clover, among others, has argued, Butler seems to be restrained by her idealized quasi-Arendtian understanding of democracy, according to which democracy is the endpoint of political resistance.[17] Democracy functions as the positive opposition to current depoliticized political regimes. Leaving revolutionary demands to one side, Butler remains firmly within the current ideological regime of what we might call "democratism," for which democracy is a "transcendental value," as Clover puts it, monopolizing politics and emptying it of historical specificity. The invocation of another kind of democracy is problematic and only helps to solidify the existing political system. Democracy has saturated the very horizon of politics. As the Italian philosopher Mario Tronti puts it: "Political democracy is realized."[18] And "really existing democracy" is the triumph of the economy whereby democracy signifies the identification of *homo democraticus* with *homo economicus*. There is neither a historical nor a political, economic dimension to Butler's analysis, so we end up with a fairly abstract political set-up in which democracy is a historical invariant with bodies performing in squares contesting the way the ruling system is interpellating them and demanding more democracy or a true democracy. Today, democracy more often than not functions as a ruling representation in Debord's sense, an idea through which capitalist society imagines itself.[19] Therefore, it is problematic to refer to democracy as inherently

good—tainted by different regimes and in specific places but essentially above critique.

The attempt to rework Arendt's privileging of speech to include the body reproduces a distinction between needs and political acts. As if political struggle is "merely cultural," bodies in movement and speech acts. Public acts of self-constitution are of course hugely important in any political struggle—people sleeping in Tahrir Square and thus contesting the authorities—but restricting political resistance to such performative acts tends not only to leave out the material circumstances of those protesting but also to reproduce the opposition between good, nonviolent protesters and bad, violent thugs. No less problematic is the omission of large-scale structural changes that have to do with the general law of capitalist accumulation, analyzed by Karl Marx in *Capital* and by generations of Marxists ever since.

Butler's analysis of the new cycle of protests raises the question of violence but quickly forecloses it. If we want to understand the new wave of protests, we have to rethink the notion of violence beyond the opposition of violence and nonviolence, and we must critique the attachment to the transcendental notion of democracy. As shown by, among others, the German council-communist philosopher Karl Korsch and the Italian historian and co-founder of the Italian Communist Party Angelo Tasca modern national democracies are very capable of turning totalitarian in times of crisis and social unrest. That was the case in the interwar period in Europe when national democracies in Italy and Germany suppressed revolutionary movements and opted for a totalitarian tightening in order to safeguard capital.[20] In times of crisis, democratic regimes have more often than not opted for order and control—read the preservation of private property—in order to prevent any serious challenge to the ruling order. The rise of Trump, Salvini, and other like-minded politicians to power shows the totalitarian plasticity of democracy.[21]

Democracy is a safeguard against capitalist exploitation or what we, following Slavoj Žižek, could call systemic violence; indeed, it has shown itself to be a very effective way of organizing the labor force by including or excluding excess labor.[22] The political is economic, and as Marx showed in *Capital*, every economic transaction is based on structural violence: "Between equal rights, force [Gewalt] decides."[23] Every act of exchange is a reminder of the original violence of what Marx called "primitive accumulation."

Butler's analysis of how human bodies can be a permanent and irrepressible source of political-aesthetic resistance is hugely important as a contribution to the analysis of the subversiveness of seemingly unpolitical acts. Butler, however, remains attached to a liberal idea of politics (democracy and nonviolence) and thus paradoxically ends up restricting the important expansion of politics that she is engaged in. Because she does not address the question of the economy, she ends up gesturing toward a change in the way the system is managed, not a change of the system itself. Her "political" critique remains limited and points toward a democratically controlled capitalism, not the abolition of commodity production. Following Amadeo Bordiga, Debord, and other left communist thinkers, I would argue that the revolutionary position is to try to make the state utterly useless by destroying the economy.[24]

Relieving the State

To get a better idea of the role of violence in the new protest movements, we may now turn to the Italian philosopher Marcello Tarì and his latest book, *Non esiste la rivoluzione infelice: Il comunismo della destituzione*.[25] By combining Giorgio Agamben's analysis of the relationship between sovereignty and

the form-of-life with the Invisible Committee's manifesto-like accounts of ongoing and coming insurrections, Tarì proposes analyzing the new cycle of protests as destituent revolts, that is, revolts that have no straight forward "political" goal or program they want to achieve and implement.[26] The new protests are characterized by refusing politics and abandoning the established political system. It is a question of destituting power, removing or suspending it, not replacing it with a new government.

Tarì's account starts with the Argentinian *piquetero* revolt in 2001 when people took to the streets in response to the economic collapse of the country.[27] Protesters interrupted commerce and governmental functions by impeding the movement of traffic and merchandise along provincial, national, or international routes, thus, cutting off access to thoroughfares. The piqueteros were able to do so outside the traditional unions and political parties. The protesters explicitly refrained from entering the already established political public sphere and called for an end to politics rather than a new government or a new policy. A popular slogan within the uprising was: *¡Que se vayan todos! ¡Que no se quede ni uno solo!* (Everybody out [of the government]! Nobody stays!) The slogan was later picked up in most of the 2011 square occupation movements in North Africa and Southern Europe. Tarì shows the importance of the second part of the slogan, which has often been ignored: that it was not a question of replacing one government with another government or one political leader with another. The slogan was an expression of the protesters' frustration not just with one specific government or concrete issues such as widespread corruption in many places but with the entire governmental structure and "politics" as it has been institutionalized in modern capitalist societies. As Tarì points out, the slogan expresses an almost naïve simplicity but also a radical revolutionary critique: Just get out of there, empty the parliament! Let's get rid of all of them, "all the rulers, all

the bosses, all the liars, all the politicos, all the cowards, all the leaders, all the corrupt and the corrupters must clear the space. Leave the camp—you won't be shot or guillotined, just go, now. This is destituent violence."[28] For Tarì, this has been the principal "message" of the protests that have taken place since 2001 and on a larger scale since 2011.

According to Tarì, the different protests that have taken place all over the world in a discontinuous and scattered movement, from the 2001 piquetero protests to the Arab revolts in Egypt and Tunisia and onward, all display a desire for destitution: *Dégage*! (Get out!), as the Tunisian revolutionaries shouted to Ben Ali. The Spanish *Indignados*, the Occupy movement, and the French protests of 2016 and 2018–2019 were all characterized by this anti-political gesture that refuses to be content with limited reforms of a broken system. "Le monde ou rien" (The world or nothing), as protesters wrote and sang in Paris in 2016.

In the different slogans, calls, and demands, there is what Tarì calls "a desire for destitution," meaning a revolutionary break with existing society in its entirety. The established democratic system with its elections and procedures, media and parties have to go. It is an empty shell, a spectacle with parties competing to run a system that is automatized to such an extent that it does not matter who wins the election. Politics has merged with the market. Contrary to Butler's account, democracy today is primarily an ideology that produces voting consumer subjects, a system with no outside where you always already emerge as a voter and consumer. National democracy thus hides the work it does: the production of voters who believe that it is they who decide.

Against the rituals and institutions of actually existing democracy, its negotiations and elections, the protest movements gathered the anonymous community of the street. A specter is haunting the evacuated parliament. When the people are in the streets occupying squares, the government does not govern.

As Tarì puts is: "The revolutionary problem is thus preventing this power from getting stuck, that is, never getting captured in the form of government."[29] Never entering into institutional structures but rejecting them.

Although the protests have not yet developed into an international revolutionary movement like the proletarian offensive from 1917 to 1921, Tarì sees in them the return of revolutionary communism. More precisely, a reformulation of communism in which the revolution takes place as destitution: the communism of destitution. The revolution is no longer a question of realizing a political program—for a long period in the twentieth century, the program for Leninists and Socialists alike was "the socialization of production"—of making something real as if it does not already exist: communism as the endpoint of a political transformation. Destituent communism abandons the idea of realizing an ideal in an act; thus, there is no program to be put into practice. It is no longer a question of carrying out a series of acts or deeds that follow and confirm a communist program. According to Tarì, who is following Agamben here, the revolution consists in making power unworkable, making it impossible for politics to function, making it unable to reproduce its laws. The new destituent protests are not just transgressing the laws and opposing the state; they are withdrawing from them. It is not a question of critiquing or destroying the existing laws with a view to establishing new ones. The project is a much more complex operation whereby the law is suspended—made unreal—and it becomes impossible to follow the law (as well as break the law).

Real Anarchy

Following Agamben's reading of Walter Benjamin, Tarì argues that it is thus not a question of avoiding violence or trying

to confront an undemocratic system with nonviolent assembled bodies constituting a real democracy, as Butler argues; it is a question of abandoning power altogether, breaking the connection between law and violence.[30] As Benjamin showed already in 1921, in his enigmatic and much commented on text "On the Critique of Violence," politics and the police have fused in the modern capitalist state.[31] The violence of the police shows the confusion between the state's constituting and constituted power or the state's immanent anarchy. The violent repression of the German revolution in 1921 set in operation by the Social Democratic president Friedrich Ebert showed the anarchic or violent dimension of politics. It showed that law could suspend itself in favor of a state of emergency that enabled the slaughtering of revolutionaries or the shooting of protesters (as we have seen in France where dozens of Gilets jaunes protesters have lost eyes and hands to police weapons).[32] In his text, Benjamin argues for the destitution—*Entsetzung* in German—of law and state, that is the unmaking (*ent-*) of the instituted (*setzen*). The state, *Gewalt* as government, was to be deposed or displaced.

Benjamin and Tarì are trying to think a different kind of violence, one that is wholly outside or beyond the law. The opposition between violence and nonviolence is thus replaced by the idea of non-juridical violence—a revolutionary violence that breaks the dialectic of "law-founding and law-preserving violence," abandons the state's systematization of violence in favor of a pure violence that does not find its cause outside itself, pointing to the juridical framing of rights in some Right (of rights).[33] Against the state's pseudo-anarchy, where the state of exception is always presupposed and reproduced as what Agamben calls an "inclusive exclusion," Benjamin is trying to locate a real state of exception outside the law. As Thanos Zartaloudis writes, Benjamin wants to break "the continuum of the dialectic

of violence within a juridical systematization of human action" by de-juridifying "the ethical plane of existence."[34] The revolution is an abandonment of the state's over-juridification of life. Pure violence is a break with this order—a destitution of state and history. And an end to government.

Tarì attempts to reimagine the revolution in a new way with and on the basis of the contemporary protest movements. The new protests suspend classic political claims and introduce a different temporality. There is no future political goal; the protests are "blocking the normal functioning of society," rendering society ungovernable while engaging in an "immediate material transformation of life" as it is lived in the capitalist city, not unlike the way the artistic avant-garde tried to in an earlier period.[35] The challenge is an objective one: A preexisting political revolutionary vocabulary is no longer available, and the protesters, thus, have to experiment and reinvent the revolution. In that way, they are engaged in an aesthetic endeavor where they are trying to create a revolutionary imagination. The Western working-class movement and its political project turned out to be compatible with the capitalist mode of production. Communism, thus, has to be excavated from the ruins of really existing socialism, the post-World War II planner state, and all the left-wing groups that continue to organize the past, effectively inhibiting any real movement of struggle. It is, therefore, necessary to go elsewhere and abandon the idea of realizing a political program. It is more a question of experimenting without a predetermined goal, not unlike the creative process of the expanded artwork or the avant-gardist work-in-progress. What Benjamin conceived of as "pure means."

In contrast to Butler's democratistic attempt to differentiate between illegitimate violence and legitimate nonviolence, Tarì is striving to affirm the radical gesture present in the protests—a gesture that cannot be contained within actually existing

democracy but which attacks that very model and its political, economic premises. Confronted with the emergence of late fascism in government, it does not make sense to try to save the established democratic political order, as Butler proposes. Her foreshortened analysis obscures the "totalitarian" possibility in a national democracy—the fact that national democracy's function is to manage labor inputs and absorb or exclude migrant labor or anybody deemed foreign to that model. We are already "at war" with the state.

Notes

1. Tiqqun, *Introduction to Civil War*, trans. Alexander Galloway & Jason E. Smith (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010), 34.
2. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," trans. Harry Zohn, in *Selected Writings: Volume 4: 1938–1940*, ed. Marcus P. Bullock & Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 394.
3. Jacques Camatte, "Against Domestication," trans. David Loneragan, in *This World We Must Leave and Other Essays* (New York: Autonomedia, 1995), 118.
4. See Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, *After the Great Refusal: Essays on Contemporary Art, Its Contradictions and Difficulties* (Winchester & Washington: Zero Books, 2018).
5. "Black Block: le Sénat adopte un texte des Républicains contre les violences dans les manifestations," *Le Monde*, October 23, 2018, https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2018/10/23/black-bloc-le-senat-adopte-un-texte-des-republicains-contre-les-violences-dans-les-manifestations_5373575_823448.html; "Time to Stop Violence and Restore Order in Hong Kong," *People's Daily Online*, August 9, 2019, http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0809/c90000-9604626.html.
6. Néstor Kirchner cited in Benjamin Dangl, *Dancing with Dynamite: Social Movements and States in Latin America* (Edinburgh & Oakland: AK Press, 2010), 70.

7. David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London & New York: Verso, 2012), 157.
8. Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assemblies* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2015).
9. Cf. Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Time* (London & New York: Verso, 1994).
10. Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assemblies*, 49.
11. Butler also understands "strikes," "hunger strikes in prison," "work stoppages," "occupying government buildings," and "boycotts" as nonviolent and writes: "The task is to find a way to cultivate antagonism into a nonviolent practice." *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assemblies*, 187–189.
12. Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assemblies*, 187.
13. Philip Rizk, "The Necessity of Revolutionary Violence in Egypt," *Jadaliyya*, April 7, 2013, https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/28389.
14. Rizk, "The Necessity of Revolutionary Violence in Egypt."
15. For a critique of this framing of the Arab Revolts, see Gilbert Achcar, *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising*, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 2013).
16. Abdel-Rahman Hussein, "Was the Egyptian Revolution Really Non-Violent?", *Egypt Independent*, January 24, 2012, https://www.egyptindependent.com/was-egyptian-revolution-really-non-violent/.
17. Joshua Clover, "Two Questions of Assembly," accessed August 10, 2019, http://blogs.law.columbia.edu/praxis1313/joshua-clover-two-questions-of-assembly/. See also McKenzie Wark, "What the Performative Can't Perform," *Public Seminar*, June 8, 2016, accessed August 10, 2019, http://www.publicseminar.org/2016/06/butler/.
18. Mario Tronti, "Per la critica della democrazia politica. Tesi," in *Del spirito libero. Frammenti di vita e di pensiero* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2015), 183.
19. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995).

20. Karl Korsch, *Marxism, State and Counterrevolution* (Amsterdam and Hannover: Offizin Verlag & Internationaal instituut voor sociale geschiedenis, 2018); Angelo Tasca, *La naissance du fascisme: L'Italie de l'armistice à la marche sur Rome* [1938] (Paris: Gallimard, 1968).
21. See my analysis of the "tilt" between national democracy and totalitarianism in *Trump's Counter-Revolution* (Viwenhoe: Zero, 2018).
22. Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London: Profile Books, 2008).
23. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes and Rodney Livingstone (London: Penguin, 1976), 344.
24. Amadeo Bordiga, "Il programma rivoluzionario della società comunista elimina ogni forma di proprietà del suolo, degli impianti di produzione e dei prodotti del lavoro" [1958], *Quaderni di n+1. Proprietà e capitale* (Torino: n+1, 1991).
25. Marcello Tarì, *Non esiste la rivoluzione infelice: Il comunismo della destituzione* (Rome: Derive Approdi, 2017).
26. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016); The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009); The Invisible Committee: *Now*, trans. Robert Hurley (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2017).
27. Tarì, *Non esiste la rivoluzione infelice*, 19–20.
28. Tarì, *Non esiste la rivoluzione infelice*, 209.
29. Tarì, *Non esiste la rivoluzione infelice*, 30.
30. Tarì, *Non esiste la rivoluzione infelice*, 42.
31. Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence", trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Selected Writings: Volume I: 1913–1926*, ed. Marcus P. Bullock & Michael W. Jenning (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 2004).
32. Of course, the normalized killing of black men in the US by the police remains the most obvious example of the internal anarchy of the state. Anti-black violence is a constitutive ground of American society, not an exceptional event. But this is unrecognizable for a liberal mode of recognition. For an analysis, see Frank B.

Wilderson, "The Prison Slave as Hegemony's (Silent) Scandal," *Social Justice* 30, no. 2 (2003).

33. Tarì, *Non esiste la rivoluzione infelice*, 241.
34. Thanos Zartaloudis, "Violence Without Law? On Pure Violence as a Destituent Power," *Towards the Critique of Violence: Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben,* ed. Brendan Moran and Carlo Salzani (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 174.
35. Tarì, *Non esiste la rivoluzione infelice*, 95.

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