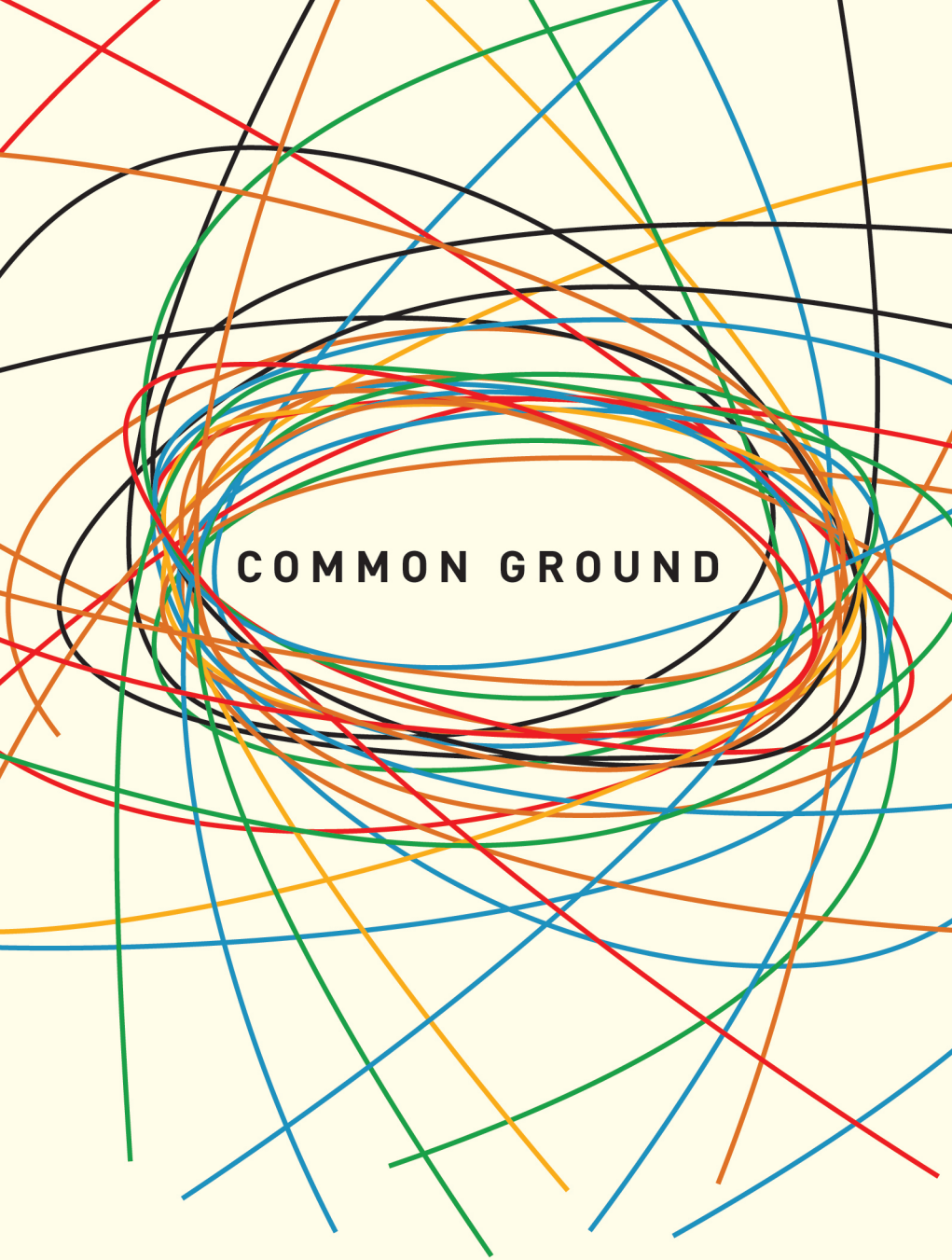

COMMON GROUND

Democracy and Collectivity in an Age of Individualism

JEREMY GILBERT

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The book is a present for Isla and Robin.

Preface

What is the most pressing political problem that faces us today?

Of course, to such a banal question, the answer must always be: 'Which "us" are you talking about?'

In this case, however, there is an answer that could be given no matter who 'we' might be: the intensifying ecological crisis, which threatens the viability of mammalian life as we know it. This is surely the first problem facing all humans and many other life forms on this planet.

And yet, this is a strange answer in a way, because doesn't everybody already know about this issue? Isn't the scientific and political consensus sufficiently robust for us to be able to say that in fact this is no longer even a *political* problem at all, being the subject of no substantial disagreement (Rancière 1998)?

Well, no, because the political problem is precisely this: everyone knows about it, and yet nobody seems able to do anything about it. Or, more precisely still: we seem unable to take a decision about what changes to our collective behaviour the situation requires, and to enact them at national or international, or often even at regional and local, levels. This, then, is fundamentally a democratic crisis: a crisis in the capacity for collective decisions to be taken and upheld. As such, it is the symptom of a much deeper crisis of political democracy which has been under way now for 30 to 40 years – almost as long as mass democracy had lasted before the crisis struck. This democratic 'crisis' has multiple overlapping causes, but it cannot be understood without grasping the political and cultural effects of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism promotes – and, where it can, enforces – a set of assumptions about human social life which have circulated for centuries, but have probably never been as powerful as they are today. According to these assumptions, the isolated, competitive individual is the basic unit of human experience. They treat all creative agency and potential rationality as properties of individuals rather than of groups, which are in turn understood only as fetters on the freedom and mobility of individuals. They enforce and normalise market relations in every conceivable social sphere, promoting an atomised, fragmented and commodified culture within

which it becomes difficult even to imagine belonging to a group on any scale which is actually capable of getting things done.

The consequences for conceptualising and practising democracy are obvious: insofar as democracy necessarily implies the creative and potentially rational agency of groups, it simply cannot be expected to work. This is the unspoken assumption of neoliberal culture which renders most of our political institutions worthless and ineffective today: democracy cannot work, because all collectivities are inherently impotent. Or if they are not, then they should be, because the other informing assumption of individualist culture is this: if collectivities are ever capable of exercising agency, then this is only in the form of a monstrous and homogenising mass, a fascist crowd.

This poses a particular problem for the Left, which has always staked its claims on some kind of belief in the constructive and democratic potential of the collective, but which has struggled to convince large-scale publics of this potential during the decades following the defeat of Soviet communism. Even before that particular defeat, at least since the early 1970s, the traditional vehicles of collective agency – Labour and social-democratic parties, trade unions, leftist governments – had been losing legitimacy in most parts of the world, as they struggled to adapt their industrial-era practices to the complexities of a post-industrial, 'post-Fordist' world.

And yet this legitimacy was not only undermined by the emergence of post-Fordism and the rise of neoliberalism. In fact it was arguably the 'New Lefts' of the 1960s, and the social movements of the 1970s, which posed the first lethal challenges to the highly conformist, homogenising model of collectivity which informed the political and democratic institutions inherited from the mid twentieth century. This book contends that the anti-democratic project of neoliberalism has been as much as anything a defensive reaction on the part of the corporate elite to the challenges posed by the demands of the New Lefts for autonomy and participatory democracy.

Since that time, a whole range of political, social and cultural experiments – all implicitly opposed to the logic of neoliberalism – have tried to mobilise a different set of implicit assumptions about the nature of collectivity and sociality, asserting that these can in fact be understood as dynamic, productive conditions of possibility for all kinds of creative innovation. These experiments range from the reform

of the former Communist parties to the mass experiment in collective intelligence which is the World Wide Web (Lévy 1997, Benkler 2006); from the World Social Forum to the communal councils of Venezuela; from the Green parties to rave culture; from Negri's theory of the multitude to the pirates of the peer-to-peer world. This book tries to draw out the philosophical and political implications of asserting the claim which informs all such experiments: that human (and even extra-human) collectivity does not have to be understood merely in terms of aggregations of atomised individuals or of homogenising and homogeneous communities; that sociality is both constitutive of our being, and a condition of dynamic and unpredictable creativity; and that what democracy means, in its fullest sense, is just the expression of that complex creative potential which inheres in every group or collectivity.

To this end, the book explores the relationship between ideas of democracy and ideas of collectivity, with particular reference to the radical philosophical tradition, and draws some political and analytical conclusions from those explorations. In particular it draws on this tradition in order to make a substantial critique of the legacy of liberal individualism, not in the name of any kind of conservative ideal of community, but in the name of a radical democratic politics. Its central argument is in favour of the concept of sociality as a condition of dynamic multiplicity and complex creativity, and against any assumption that collectivity can only be understood in terms either of a simple aggregation of individuals, or of a homogeneous and monolithic community. The book argues that these two ideas of collectivity or sociality still haunt many contemporary assumptions about democracy, greatly limiting the potential efficacy of democratic politics. It argues that the tradition of participatory democracy associated with radical social and political movements for over a century, and most recently instantiated in phenomena such as the Occupy movement, is capable of exceeding these limitations. It explores the implications for thinking about the politics of artistic and cultural forms and for ideas such as 'relational aesthetics', and for ideas about ecology and its politics.

Chapter 1, 'Postmodernity and the Crisis of Democracy', examines the idea that we (meaning more or less everyone on the planet) are experiencing a crisis in the efficacy of representative democratic

institutions. It largely endorses this idea, arguing that existing systems of representative democracy were relatively effective in the era of 'Fordist' industrial capitalism, but that they have not responded successfully to the pressure exerted by a new set of social demands emerging in the 1960s (from women, young people, black people, etc.), to the growing complexity of 'post-Fordist' societies, or to the mobility of capital in an era of financialisation and globalisation. Weakened by these challenges, the chapter argues, governmental institutions have largely been captured by the ideology of neoliberalism, which the political class has normally colluded with in preference to acceding to the demands for more radical and participatory forms of democracy which characterised what the Trilateral Commission[1] called the 'democratic surge' of the 1960s and 1970s (Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki 1975).

Chapter 2 is titled 'A War of All Against All: Neoliberal Hegemony and Competitive Individualism'. It traces many of the assumptions informing neoliberal ideology to the earliest manifestations of the tradition of 'possessive individualism' in the work of Thomas Hobbes, as analysed by the great Canadian political philosopher, C.B. MacPherson. The chapter argues strongly against the normative and conceptual assumptions of this tradition, and further argues that they can be understood in terms of the persistence of the abstract logic of Hobbes's theory that any society is merely an aggregation of naturally competing individuals, bound together only by the fact that each has a singular relationship to the sovereign, and not by mutual relations of any kind. Hobbes imagines the collectivity which emerges on the basis of these relations as a kind of giant meta-subject which he calls by the biblical name 'Leviathan'. He imagines this collective as nothing but a kind of super-individual, in a gesture which the next chapter identifies as typical of a kind of 'meta-individualism' which cannot grasp the complex multiplicity of the social.

Chapter 3, 'Leviathan Logics: Group Psychology from Hobbes to Laclau', explores the persistence of this limited model of sociality in the tradition of group psychology in the work of Le Bon and Freud, upon which Ernesto Laclau draws heavily in his most recent work. At the same time, the chapter highlights the crucial importance of Laclau's, and Chantal Mouffe's, analytical deployment of this tradition's best resources.

Chapter 4 is titled 'The State of Community Opened: Multitude and Multiplicity'. It asks what other models of sociality might be available from the Western philosophical tradition that can allow for the possibility of groups being formed on the basis of mutual or 'horizontal' relations, and traces a history of non-individualist thought through Spinoza, Hegel and Marx. The chapter points to a conflict within the Marxist tradition. On the one hand it delineates that strand within Marxian thought which understands the proletariat or the revolutionary party to be essentially a kind of radical Leviathan, and identifies this mode of thinking with the determinist tradition within Marxism. Conversely the chapter highlights a strand of thinking within Marx's writings which understands the social in terms of its contingency, complexity, and changeability and which is non-deterministic in its theory of historical change. It goes on to chart the emergence from within the least deterministic current of Marxist thought of the idea of 'multitude' as a way of describing the logic of collectivity in terms which are not at all meta-individualist, but which imagine the collective as defined by its multiplicity, heterogeneity and complexity, in explicit opposition to Leviathan logic.

Chapter 5 is called 'The Non-Fascist Crowd: Individuation and Infinite Relationality'. It follows on from Chapters 3 and 4 by considering in more detail how to understand the dynamics and logics of social relations without reproducing implicitly meta-individualist assumptions. According to such assumptions, crowds are tendentially fascist by nature, with this tendency manifesting certain inherent qualities of collectivity as such. The chapter begins with a consideration of the history of non-individualist ideas about the behaviour of crowds and offers a personal recollection of a potent example of non-fascist, anti-fascist crowd behaviour. The chapter then goes on to explore a number of theoretical models of group dynamics and individual identification which can account for such behaviour, drawing on the work of philosophers such as Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, Gilbert Simondon, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. It identifies a set of approaches which range from classical psychoanalytic ideas of individual identification, through Simondon's model of individuation as a partial process emerging from a field of 'preindividual' relations, through to Deleuze and Guattari's neo-Bergsonian model of individuation as 'becoming', the latter of which have in common a

commitment to understanding sociality as constituted by relations of mutuality and 'horizontality'.

In this long chapter, Simondon is identified as particularly interesting for his idea of the 'preindividual', because this seems to be a convincing and logical way of thinking about the implications of the fact that a complex field of social relations always pre-exists every individual person and every individual action. My argument links Simondon's model of the preindividual with a comment of Hannah Arendt's to the effect that every social situation is characterised by the unpredictable effects of 'boundless action' – the multiple ways in which actions rebound upon each other with unintended consequences – in order to suggest that we can draw from these thinkers an idea of 'infinite relationality' as defining the general condition of sociality as such. It then explores this idea through the work of a number of relevant thinkers, such as Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy and Emmanuel Levinas, considering also the recent popularity within mainstream 'centre-left' political thought of 'relational' thinking. The chapter finally explores the implications of a thinking of 'infinite relationality' for understanding the nature of the human, arguing that this indicates a necessary affinity with ideas such as the post-humanism of Donna Harraway and the 'vital materialism' of Jane Bennett and William Connolly, all of which would argue that it is necessary to understand humans as themselves caught up in a complex web of 'social' relations with machines, minerals and non-human organisms.

Chapter 6 is called 'Feeling Together: Affect, Identity and the Politics of the Common'. This chapter explores the thematics of 'affect' – sensation, feeling, emotion, all understood as social phenomena – which have emerged from the work of thinkers such as Deleuze and Simondon, and from schools of thought such as vital materialism. The chapter considers the relationships between Sigmund Freud, Simondon, Deleuze and others in terms of their differing theories of subjectivity, identifying a continuum that runs from Freud's model of identification through to the Spinozan idea of experience as an 'affective process without a subject'. It goes on to explore the political and analytic implications of all of these ideas, identifying the notion of 'the commons' as a particularly useful one for mobilising a politics grounded in ideas of complex sociality and radical democracy, and

finally considers some of the conceptual issues raised by the ideas of 'the commons' and 'the common'.

Chapter 7 is called 'On the Impossibility of Making Decisions: Affect, Agency and the Democratic Sublime'. It explores the implications of ideas of affect for a non-individualist conception of political agency, and goes on to develop these ideas with reference to philosophical reflections on the nature of decision to be found in the work of Derrida, Levinas and Laclau. The chapter then asks what some of the political and analytic implications might be of such a conception of agency, in particular what the implications might be for thinking about cultural and aesthetic experience, examining the arguments for and against Nicolas Bourriaud's 'relational aesthetics' and the ongoing value of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque. The chapter explores concepts of pleasure and empowerment and argues that neoliberal culture works against any experience of collectivity and sociality as empowering, despite the fact that all empowerment and pleasure must have a social dimension, and argues for the defence of sites of collective joy, while also suggesting that the empowering thrill of 'the democratic sublime' need not always be experienced as pleasurable. Finally, it reflects upon some of the problems of political strategy and institutional government implicitly raised by its arguments, in particular considering the significance of experiments in participatory institutional governance and horizontal political organisation.

The final chapter offers conclusions, some of which are more tentative than others.

1

Postmodernity and the Crisis of Democracy

Post-Democracy

Democracy was first widely diagnosed as being 'in crisis' in the 1970s, by analysts from both Left and Right (Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki 1975, Hall 1978). Several decades later, few of the symptoms of that crisis – a proliferation of competing social demands, a fragmentation of public and political culture, a growing distrust of government – seem to have been cured (Hay 2007). Today we live in a post-democratic age.

Using a term coined by Jacques Rancière,[1] Colin Crouch (2004) argues that since the early 1970s we have entered an era of 'post-democracy', in which the key institutions of democratic representation do not function in even the minimal fashion that they did during the middle decades of the twentieth century, and in which elections become increasingly empty procedures, offering publics the opportunity formally to validate programmes whose contents they have virtually no control over, and which differ little between competing parties. Crouch argues that the 'democratic moment' of the highly developed capitalist countries occurred in the middle decades of the twentieth century. By contrast,

> the idea of post-democracy helps us to describe situations when boredom, frustration and disillusion have settled in after a democratic moment; when powerful minority interests have become far more active than the mass of ordinary people in making the political system work for them; where political elites have learned to manage and manipulate popular demands; where people have

> to be persuaded to vote by top-down publicity campaigns. (Crouch 2004: 19–20)

Crouch's analysis here and throughout this work points to a number of salient aspects of the post-democratic situation. Most importantly, he indicates that while the general liberalisation of advanced capitalist societies may well have expanded the personal freedom of their citizens and allowed many new sets of demands to emerge, this does not necessarily lead to a democratisation of those societies in any meaningful sense, insofar as those demands are certainly not given equal chances to be met or even to be realised as actual political projects. In fact, as he argues very persuasively, the proliferation of demands, positions and identities characteristic of complex capitalist societies, the fact that particular persons and communities may find their interests overlapping and conflicting with those of others in often unpredictable ways, makes it increasingly difficult for coherent yet clearly antagonistic communities of interest to emerge; given that existing 'democratic' systems of government are almost exclusively designed to facilitate the representation of interests in such terms, by dividing the political spectrum into clearly defined 'parties', it is perhaps not surprising that citizens and politicians experience them as increasingly frustrating and unsatisfactory. To put this in slightly different terms: in a world of multiple, fragmented sets of demands and values, it becomes increasingly difficult to imagine a situation in which the majority of members of a given society can agree on a whole package of measures to be enacted over a four- or five-year period, without any further consultation. The result is that political leaders increasingly see and present themselves not as democratic representatives of their electors' views, but as professional delegates who are to be entrusted with the job of government on the basis of their competence or likability. In such a context, the decisions of governments and politicians are influenced in part by their perceptions of voters' wishes (which may be elicited casually or formally, through mechanisms such as polls or focus groups, or may be purely based on prejudice and supposition), but very much by pressure from various lobbies. It is absolutely unsurprising under such circumstances that the most persuasive lobbies should prove to be the best resourced:

those representing the interests of the wealthiest groups, individuals and institutions.

The Demand for Democracy

The other key indicator of the crisis of representative democracy is the increasing frequency with which demands for far more radical, participatory[2] and effective democratic forms inform emergent political movements and their organisational practice. The campaigns against neoliberal trade policies in the 1990s whose most famous manifestation was the 'battle in Seattle' in 1999 (Thomas 2000) arguably found their culmination in the first World Social Forum in 2001 (Gilbert 2008b, Sen and Waterman 2012). The first WSF was held in the Brazilian city of Porto Allegre, internationally famous at the time principally for the innovative 'participatory budgeting' process instituted by the municipal government (led by the *Partito dos Trabalhadores* or *PT* – the Workers' Party), which enabled key budgeting decisions to be taken by a rolling process of federated open local meetings. The practice of participatory forms of democracy designed to promote 'horizontal' rather than 'vertical' relations[3] between group members became one of the characteristic features of the anti-capitalist movement at this time, while calls for more participatory forms of democracy were heard quite loudly during the French presidential election of 2007 (Crépon and Stiegler 2007). In the wake of the economic crisis which began in 2008, explicit critiques of the nonrepresentative nature of the political class were central to the discourse of Spanish protesters – the so-called *indignados* (Hancox 2012) – and of Greek campaigners against the austerity programme imposed by European Union. This list could be extended, but the implication is clear: demands for more radical forms of democracy have been made with increasing explicitness, articulacy and frequency in recent years. It would be a mistake to see something wholly new in this development. It is worth remembering, for example, that the model of Soviet democracy was originally conceived as a far more participatory and accountable form than traditional parliamentary representation; but it is just as significant to note the extent to which this objective dropped out of the programmes of much of the labour and socialist movements over the course of the twentieth century (Sassoon 1996: 60–82). It resurfaced again to some

extent in the radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Miller 1987, Polletta 2002), but was never widely perceived or treated as a serious significant goal. Its explicit re-emergence in recent times is therefore surely a key indicator of the crisis of representative democracy.

A final point worth noting here is the extent to which, at least since the 1980s, various commentators have speculated upon the democratic possibilities which might be enabled by the apparent emergence of a new socio-technical paradigm, associated with the development of cybernetic technologies, computer networks and sophisticated telecommunications. What Castells calls 'the network society' (Castells 1996), characterised by the proliferation of 'rhizomatic' forms and relationships (Deleuze and Guattari 1988), would seem almost self-evidently to facilitate a significant increase in human beings' capacity for inclusive collective decision making, as various cyber-utopians have pointed out over the years (Rheingold 2002, Shirky 2009), just as social media massively facilitate certain kinds of autonomous collective self-organisation.[4] Why shouldn't the Internet be used to facilitate mass exercises in public deliberation and decision making over government policy? The fact that no significant steps have been taken anywhere to realise these possibilities does not negate them as possibilities, but the contrast is striking between a system of representative democracy which is failed and failing, and an emergent techno-social paradigm which is widely accepted as a defining force in world politics and culture, and which would seem to provide the basis for a possible alternative. The difficulty of bringing these ideas into mainstream political discourse, despite their self-evident logic, is itself the ultimate symbol of democracy's general institutional crisis.

The emergence of the network paradigm cannot be understood simply as a phenomenon in its own right however. In fact it can only be properly understood by considering the much wider context of which it is an integral part. This context is the general set of social, technological, cultural, economic and political changes which commentators have tried to designate with the term 'postmodernity'.

Post-Fordism and Postmodernity

In his analysis of 'post-democracy', Crouch makes clear that changes to the global and local organisation of capitalism are fundamental

to the shift which he describes, although he does not dwell in detail upon all of the mechanisms which connect the one to the other. At the same time, he makes only cursory reference to the idea of postmodernity, the term which has been most widely used by theorists of the contemporary who have tried to link transformations in the organisation of capitalism with very large-scale cultural, social and institutional shifts. This isn't a criticism of Crouch, but it does leave open an important avenue of inquiry, because his analysis overlaps in very interesting ways with some of the most influential among such analyses of shifts in the organisation of capitalism and their cultural consequences, particularly those coming from Anglo-American Marxism. While Frederic Jameson's account of 'postmodernism' as 'the cultural logic of late capitalism' (1991) is probably the best known representative of this genre, it is David Harvey's seminal *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989) which offers the most coherent account of the emergence of the 'postmodern' condition as symptomatic of the broad shift from Fordism to post-Fordism.[5] Harvey's account, which itself pays little attention to issues of formal and electoral politics, dovetails perfectly with Crouch's.

Harvey's book provides one of the most lucid descriptions of the shift from 'Fordism' to 'post-Fordism.' The former term refers to the convergence of new forms of managerial discipline and industrial technology which made possible the implementation of the assembly line and the intensive 8-hour day in Ford's Detroit factory in the 1920s, subsequently providing a model for all forms of commercial and governmental institution; the emergence of a form of capitalism dependent upon large-scale domestic consumption, which required action by both governments and employers to maintain employment and wage levels, including the 'social wage' provided in the form of entitlements to public services; the forms of highly regulated working, social and family life associated with the strictly gendered division of labour in advanced industrial communities; the broader emergence of 'mass culture' in the age of highly homogenised consumer goods and highly-centralised media. 'Post-Fordism' by contrast refers to the shift towards 'flexible specialisation' after the 1960s as companies compete for ever more specialised market niches, often disaggregating into networks of producers and suppliers operating only on short-terms contracts as they seek to maximise their responsiveness to micro-

fluctuations in consumer demand (fluctuations which a whole industry of designers and advertisers works to exacerbate); the consequent disaggregation of communities held together by common patterns of work and leisure into looser networks and micro-cultures; the general shift from a manufacturing-led economy to a service and retail-led economy. Harvey very persuasively links these changes to the general process of cultural fragmentation which is often described in terms of 'postmodernism' or 'postmodernity'.

The philosopher who did most to popularise the idea of the 'postmodern' is Jean-François Lyotard, particularly with his classic essay *The Postmodern Condition* (1984). What Lyotard is fundamentally concerned with in this work is the changing status of knowledge in what would later be called a 'knowledge economy' (Leadbeater 1999). Lyotard's starting question concerns the likely impact of 'computerisation' on ideas of truth and veracity, and is oriented principally towards the question of what it is that makes knowledge socially legitimate. Observing in 1978 both that 'knowledge' – software, design, patents – is becoming the key driving force in capitalist accumulation, and that the production of knowledge is itself increasingly subject to the process of commodification, Lyotard predicts that the consequence is likely to be a major shift in attitudes to knowledge and its value. In particular, Lyotard sees a decline in the prestige and potency of 'narrative' forms of knowledge which legitimate truth by reference to an over-arching story about the world, in favour of a *pragmatic* approach to knowledge which values 'truths' or fragments of knowledge solely on the basis of what instrumental or commercial effects they can produce.

Although it is possible to translate Lyotard's ideas, or something very like them, into a sort of benign cosmopolitan liberal relativism (for example, Rorty 1989), Lyotard himself was never merely sanguine about its consequences, and in particular he made a set of pessimistic yet astonishingly accurate predictions about the likely consequences for institutions of formal education. While schools and universities have traditionally legitimated themselves and the knowledge that they offer to students with reference to narratives of some kind – be they the grand narrative of the Western tradition to which education is supposed to offer access, or emancipatory narratives derived from the Enlightenment's claim to remove the veils of ignorance and superstition – since the 1970s they have come under increasing pressure from

students, parents, governments, media and corporations to legitimate their activities in wholly instrumental terms, offering knowledge to students and the wider society which is judged worthwhile solely in terms of its capacity to generate value by rendering students 'employable' and by producing new knowledge which has immediate commercial value. This, for Lyotard, is absolutely symptomatic of 'the postmodern condition'.[6]

It is never entirely clear whether Lyotard thinks that this situation is welcome or simply irreversible, although his tone tends to suggest the latter. He certainly offers little comfort to the reader who might hope that a revival of conventional democratic politics could be a possible response. Lyotard understands a key feature of the postmodern culture, which follows logically from the decline of narrative knowledge, to be the impossibility of understanding societies as totalities. The plurality of inconsistent and non-commensurate 'language games'[7] within which individuals and groups now participate renders impossible any such conception. For Lyotard, there is simply no common point of reference between the various 'language games' of science, politics, education, the arts, and so on, in which we all participate every day, and hence there is no political 'metalanguage' in which it would be possible to make overarching collective decisions about the general direction of social change.

It should now be easy to see how this narrative maps onto Crouch's, and enables us to deepen and extend it considerably. The party political systems of representative democracy which were consolidated in the mid-twentieth century absolutely depended upon the wide-ranging legitimacy of narrative forms of knowledge for their efficacy; communism, fascism, socialism, liberalism and conservative nationalism all offered their partisans a clear sense of their place in the world, of the coherence of their interests, and of what it would mean politically for those interests to be realised. The postmodern condition does not make it easy for such coherences to emerge, and tends to promote a much more fragmented, localised, 'pragmatic' approach to the resolution of social problems. Under such circumstances, politicians tend to present themselves not so much as the representatives of a coherent body of ideas and goals, but as competent technocrats whose role is to commission solutions to discrete problems from appropriate 'experts'. The possibility of large numbers of people coming together

in some form to make collective decisions about major issues – of 'democracy', in other words – is clearly undermined in the process.

Of course, this itself is not an exhaustive account of 'post-democracy', because it does not allow for the extent to which neoliberalism has actively undermined democratic institutions through the agency of its own very grand narrative, according to which the spread of market relations is the ultimate and only route to the modernisation of social institutions, and to the emancipation of human creativity from the bonds of community and tradition (Brown 2005: 37–59). We will explore later the particular ways in which neoliberalism has been able to adapt itself with peculiar fluency to the postmodern situation. For now, I want to examine with a little more precision the ways in which the postmodern condition as described by Lyotard is bound up with the emergence of post-Fordism, and what the analytical consequences of understanding their relationship might be.

Lyotard's explanation of the sources of the postmodern condition is quite cursory, and he initially seems to present it as a direct consequence of 'computerisation' (1984: 7), which makes possible radical changes in the ways that knowledge can be stored, circulated, divided and accessed. However, very little of his analysis makes sense if we overlook the fact that this process is itself assumed to be taking place in the context of capitalist social relations, as classically understood within the Marxist tradition. Lyotard's account is as much about the effects of the *commodification* of knowledge as it is about the implications of digitisation. Except in a social context in which market relations not only predominate, but are actively enforced and extended to the benefit of powerful elites, there is no reason why digitisation should necessarily lead to the fragmented and instrumental deployment of all knowledge that Lyotard sees taking place. In this, I think that Lyotard's explanations remain rather closer to those of Marxist analysts like Harvey and Jameson than is usually acknowledged. It is Jameson who is rightly credited with pioneering the analysis of postmodernism as 'the cultural logic of late capitalism', the consequence of the expansion of commodity relations to previously untouched zones of culture; but I think that this understanding was always implicit in Lyotard's account. On this reading, all of these writers more or less converge upon an account of the postmodern condition as a consequence of a combination of technological changes and the extension of capitalist social relations

into new areas. It is worth noting that this is a rather different account to that of those commentators such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000), who have seen the emergence of post-Fordism primarily as a capitalist *response* to the challenge posed to Fordism by revolutionary forces at the end of the 1960s. The Harvey–Jameson–Lyotard account stresses the extent to which new technologies have enabled capitalism to extend itself, rather than understanding its adoption of them as purely reactive in the face of democratic challenges 'from below', and remains at best ambivalent about whether those democratic challenges ever made any real progress. For David Harvey in particular, it is not at all clear that the period since the mid 1960s has been anything other than one of defeat and retreat for progressive political forces.

There is surely some truth to all of these accounts. On the one hand, the radical challenge to Fordism in the late 1960s seems to have preceded any significant moves to go beyond it on the part of capital and its agencies. On the other hand, a set of technological advances made after about 1950 have presented those agencies with new opportunities not only to meet that challenge, but in the process actually to extend the domain of commodified market relations and even to withdraw a number of major concessions made to workers during the Fordist epoch of the mid twentieth century, while undermining the power of organised labour on a global scale. From this perspective, the crisis of the early 1970s was multidimensional in character, and it is not surprising that while democratic forces made certain gains – most notably in winning widespread support, except in conservative enclaves, for ideals of sexual and ethnic equality – it was nonetheless the richest and most powerful agents who were best able to take initial advantage of the new technologies in order to improve their strategic position.[8]

The Difficulty of Collectivity and the Technicity of Democracy

These processes have posed enormous problems for the organisation of labour since the 1970s, as the most acute commentators could already see that they were going to many years ago (Hobsbawm 1978, Gorz 1980). At the same time, as we have seen, they pose equal and related problems for the systems of representative democracy which emerged almost coterminously with Fordism. This is a point which is almost

never made in commentary on the history of democracy: while it is true that the representative democracy which emerged in the first half of the twentieth century was the product of centuries of struggle and piecemeal reform, the actual emergence of mass democracy, complete with women's suffrage, in those countries where it did emerge, was almost entirely simultaneous with the emergence of mass consumer capitalism and early Fordism. It is my suggestion that this was not an accidental coincidence, but that the technological and institutional apparatus of Fordism made possible the emergence of a culture of shared experience and collective agency without which the 'democratic moment' could never have been achieved.

This was true for several reasons. Firstly, without a culture of shared experience and common identity, producing relatively homogeneous constituencies and organised into relatively well-defined camps, the rather clumsy institutions of representative government could never have had the effect of allowing large-scale consensus to emerge on key issues and enabling it to be enacted by governments. The history of the past 30 years, during which more and more countries have had these institutions, and yet they have proved to be less and less effective as instruments of democracy, surely bears this out. Secondly, I would point out again that it is a truism that even the most democratically elected governments are harried constantly by lobbies and interests of various kinds, and that without the intervention of democratic forces, they are always likely to accede to the demands of powerful institutions and the elites who control them. During the Fordist era, however, organised labour was able to exert a historically unparalleled level of countervailing pressure on both governments and corporations. During this era of full-employment, mass consumption and low capital mobility, capitalists often did not have the option of replacing recalcitrant workers with more compliant counterparts, at home or abroad; hence the threat of a short- or long-term withdrawal of labour became a very potent weapon with which major concessions could be won at the levels of wages, working conditions and social spending. Organised labour therefore amounted to an effective countervailing force to the power of those elites, which meant that governments were themselves less dependent upon and vulnerable to pressures from them. At the same time, I would suggest that some of the earliest elements of Fordist technology and culture played a crucial

role in enabling arguably the most important mass movement of the early twentieth-century – the movement for women's suffrage – to develop and to reach a successful conclusion in many countries. This is a critical issue of which to take cognisance. Too many histories of 'democracy' treat the struggle for women's empowerment as citizens as an afterthought. To me it is simply self-evident that the enfranchisement of a majority of the adult population was the single most significant step in the development of mass representative democracy. So it is therefore worth reflecting that without the mass-circulation press, the mass-production of the badges, ceramics, textiles, and other pieces of material propaganda which formed much of the currency of the movement,[9] and without the growing sense that mechanisation ought to be able to erase many of the 'natural' physical disadvantages suffered by women in some walks of life, it would have been much more difficult for women to develop a corporate sense of identity and a determined and effective campaign for their democratic rights (Tickner 1987).

Finally, I would argue that the particular configuration of material and institutional technologies which defined the industrial and managerial infrastructure of Fordism – what we might call the Fordist technical assemblage – was peculiarly conducive to the power and authority of centralising administrations, be they governmental or corporate. Early broadcast media, cinema in the age of the studio system, railways at the peak of their historical importance, early electrical grids, telephonic and telegraphic networks: all tended to facilitate central control over large territories and over high-quantity flows of people, things and ideas. This was the age of the vertically integrated industrial conglomerate, which proved so easy to assimilate to bureaucratic control by the state (Harvey 1989: 123–40, Hughes 1989: 249–94). On a global scale, including the fascist dictatorships and the communist republics, this was the golden age of state propaganda (from the BBC to the Politburo), of nationalised industry, of expanded welfare provision and increased government control over all aspects of finance and industrial investment. At its worst these were the conditions of possibility for the totalitarian disasters of Stalinism and Nazism; at their best they enabled the New Deal administration to drag America out of the depression in the 1930s and a historically feeble and sluggish British government to make an unprecedented

attack on the roots of social inequality in the 1940s. For better or worse, governments could do things.

As Crouch and many others have pointed out (Jessop 2002, Hall and Jacques 1989), governments' ability to do such things have been severely curtailed by the emergence of a new, post-Fordist technical assemblage which has granted much more freedom of movement to capital and so has made it difficult for labour to defend its interests and for governments to act on any democratic decision which runs counter to them. This is the basic political fact of both globalisation and post-Fordism, and it has had the most dramatic consequences over the past few decades. Most strikingly, it is this as much as anything else which undermined the capacity of Soviet communism to renew itself after the 1960s. At the beginning of that decade, there was a widespread perception that the Soviet Union was in the forefront of global modernisation, having put the first man into space and having achieved astonishing industrial growth rates even by the standards of the global post-war boom (Hobsbawm 1994: 327–86). The Soviets – like their comrade Gramsci – had always been thoroughly impressed by Fordist technologies and by the ease with which their elements could be adapted to a socialist command economy and to the organisational ideology of democratic centralism. By the 1970s, however, it is clear with hindsight that the inability or unwillingness of the Soviet administration to develop a post-Fordist communism was undermining it fatally. By the 1980s it had become a cliché of cold-war rhetoric that what defined life in the communist bloc was not just a lack of political freedom, but a grey drabness which contrasted with the sparkling abundance of advanced consumer capitalism,[10] and there is good evidence that this was ultimately a major factor in undermining the political legitimacy of 'really existing socialism' even amongst some of its most privileged elites. The differentiating, deterritorialising force of 'intensive capitalism' (Lash 2010: 99–140) – and its capacity to resonate with the multifarious desires of the people in a way which the uniform egalitarianism of that kind of socialism could not – surely helped to break down the real and symbolic walls between Eastern Europe and the West as surely as did the hammers of protesters in 1989. In global terms, this itself was a clear precondition for the full-scale neoliberal assault of the 1990s: the World Trade Organisation would never have been able to impose a

neoliberal paradigm on the international economy as uniformly as it did while the Soviet bloc remained an implacable obstacle, as well as a potential source of support for governments and political movements with alternative agendas. Indeed, the need to mobilise and maintain support for Western capitalism in the face of the Soviet military and political threat was arguably one of the significant factors which put pressure on Western governments to make democratic concessions in the post-war period, and the disappearance of that threat was therefore one of the conditions for the emergence of 'post-democracy'.

The Meanings of Modernity

In fact, we might say that the collapse of the command economies of 'actually existing socialism' marked the termination of a long story which was fundamental to the whole experience of 'modernity'. In the simplest terms, this was the story of the gradual expansion of humans' capacity to control and directly alter both the non-human physical world and human behaviour. The power of human beings to transform their physical environment, to communicate across great distances, to treat illness, to regulate the behaviour of entire populations or of specific individuals – for better or for worse – was transformed beyond all recognition in the centuries following the scientific revolution of the early modern period. This is in part merely the story of the growth and development of science and scientifically derived technologies, but it is also the story of the growth of the state and of the many institutions and techniques of 'discipline' (Foucault 1977) and 'governmentality' (Burchell, Gordon and Miller 1991) which Foucault spent much of his life studying, as well as of those 'technologies of the self' (Martin, Gutman and Hutton 1988) – ensembles of techniques whereby singular subjects could transform their own capacities and relations to the world – which came to preoccupy his later work. From the emergence of psychotherapy and advanced psychopharmacology to the development of physical culture (for example, the rise of modern sport or the Swedish gymnastics movement of the late nineteenth century); from the growth of prisons and asylums to the establishment of vast state security apparatuses; from the regulation of mobile labour to the regulation of capital flows; from meteorology to military satellites: all such phenomena can be understood as part of this process. Writers

such as Foucault (in at least some of his work), Weber and Adorno have tended to stress the negative consequences of these developments for human liberty, seeing the growth of disciplinary apparatuses, bureaucracy and 'administration' as the definitive features of modernity (Weber 1930, Foucault 1977, Adorno and Horkheimer 1979). On the other hand the American Marxist Marshall Berman has influentially pointed to the 'promethean' expansion of human capacities as an essentially positive constitutive feature of modern experience, without which the ambitions of socialism and communism could never have been so much as conceived (Berman 1982). Marx himself clearly saw the capacity of capitalism constantly to revolutionise the material world and social relations as a precondition for the realisation of such ambitions: until capitalism had swept aside the last vestiges of the medieval world, then the ultra-modernity of socialism could never be achieved (Marx and Engels 1967).

Indeed, I would argue that the history of modernity was precisely the history of both of these sets of experiences at once: the restless, inventive, creative, destructive, deterritorialising, self-revolutionising consequences of the expansion and intensification of capitalism; the continual deployment of new scientific and political techniques for the regulation and controlled direction of the consequences of modernisation. Capitalism shattered the old way of life of the rural villages, sending whole new populations of 'free workers' flowing into the labour market; but the new technologies of factory building, urban construction, mass communication and democratic self-organisation enabled these populations to be transformed into armies of labour and to transform themselves into a working-class movement (Thompson 1964). Capitalism wreaked havoc on many 'natural' environments, but the expansion of governmentality also made possible the emergence of 'conservation' as a legitimate and achievable goal of government (Hays 1959). And so on, and so on. From this point of view, Fordism and, above all, Stalinism, represented the very high-water mark of the history of disciplinary techniques for the regulation of social, cultural and economic life. By contrast, what marks out the epoch of human history that began with the crisis of Fordism and which has been called, amongst other things, 'postmodernity', 'late modernity' (Giddens 1991), 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2000), is the fact that capitalism's capacity to deploy a new wave of transformative technologies to extend

and intensify itself still further appears to have exceeded the capacity of any known or presently imaginable technologies of government to regulate, predict or direct the social or material effects of its so doing. This is why one of the definitive aspects of the postmodern 'structure of feeling' (Williams 1977) is the loss of that sense of implicit optimism which governed prevalent attitudes to the future throughout the history of modernity. At the same time, one of the most striking features of that structure of feeling is the fact that for the first time in history, the most important perceived threats to human well-being come not from the natural world and our inability to master it, but from the unintended consequences of technological advance: climate change, new and treatment-resistant diseases, industrial accidents and the distinctively postmodern forms of warfare which go under the misleading heading of 'terrorism' (Beck 1992, Jameson 1991: 366, Giddens 1990).[11]

To put this another way: the dislocatory power of capitalism (Laclau 1990) is still at work; but where once it dislocated 'traditional' rural patterns of life and community, it is now the very 'modern' patterns of industrial society which are themselves disrupted and destabilised in ways which nineteenth-century commentators such as Marx could not have foreseen. From this point of view, 'postmodernity' might in fact be a rather simpler affair than 'modernity'. If the experience of modernity was the experience of a perpetual *contest* between capitalism and its institutional rivals – whether feudal and traditional on the one hand or modern, democratic and socialistic on the other – then 'postmodernity' may merely be the name for the situation in which that contest has been finally resolved in capitalism's favour. From this point of view, the end of the Soviet experiment in 1989 marked the end of modernity in a very concrete way. It is easy to see why many of the legatees of the communist tradition should have found this situation so very dispiriting, and why others should have retreated into a heroic millenarianism whose 'communism' amounts to nothing more than an existential faith in the miraculous transformatory power of revolutionary 'events' (Badiou 2003, 2010).

This is by no means the only available response, however. For one thing, there is a related, but slightly different account of the history of modernity and postmodernity that I have just offered which sheds a rather different light on things, and that is the account offered in

the recent work of Hardt and Negri. For Hardt and Negri, there were always 'two modernities': the modernity of the 'multitude' and the modernity of sovereign power.

> The first mode is ... a radical revolutionary process. This modernity destroys its relations with the past and declares the immanence of the new paradigm of the world and life. It develops knowledge and action as scientific experimentation and defines a tendency towards democratic politics, posing humanity and desire at the centre of history. From the artisan to the astronomer, from the merchant to the politician, in art as in religion, the material of existence is reformed by a new life.
>
> This new emergence, however, created a war. How could such a radical overturning not incite strong antagonism? How could this revolution not determine a counterrevolution? There was indeed a counterrevolution in the proper sense of the term: a cultural, philosophical, social and political initiative that, since it could neither return to the past nor destroy the new forces, sought to dominate and expropriate the forces of the emerging movements and dynamics. This is the second mode of modernity, constructed to wage war against the new forces and establish an overarching power to dominate them. It arose within the Renaissance revolution to divert its direction, transplant the new image of humanity to a transcendent plane, relativize the capacities of science to transform the world, and above all oppose the reappropriation of power on the part of the multitude. (Hardt and Negri 2000: 74)

This account offers a narrative which is different from the one I just proposed in a very interesting way. Here, it is not so much the dynamic of capitalism per se that is understood as the engine of dislocatory change, but a more generalised drive to free humanity and its creative capacities from ancient limitations. What exactly the role of capitalism would be in this account is not wholly clear, although broadly speaking Hardt and Negri tend to understand capital as almost wholly parasitic upon the creative agency of the multitude; the best way to make sense of their narrative of modernity might therefore be to understand capital as always an agent of the 'counterrevolution' which they describe. This is a problematic assertion, however, which would

certainly depart from the accounts offered by writers such as Marx and Deleuze and Guattari, in that it would more or less completely erase the dynamic, dislocatory, deterritorialising, creative–destructive force of capital itself from the picture. Now, I want to consider whether it is possible to bring Hardt and Negri's account together with mine in a way which allows for this missing dimension without compromising the radicalism of their perspective.

We can begin by considering Hardt and Negri's claim that what the modern 'counterrevolution' has always been opposed to has been a '*reappropriation* of power on the part of the multitude'. On a very basic level there is nothing very controversial about the claim that modern republican, democratic, socialist and communist movements have sought to take back power which was once more evenly distributed within social groups but became increasingly concentrated in the hands of elites with the emergence of 'civilisation'. This is the basic historical theory proposed by Marx and Engels, for example, which sees the emergence of societies based on a division of labour as being responsible for the earliest institutionalisation of imbalances of wealth and power (Marx and Engels 1970). However, as we have seen, one of the defining characteristics of modernity has been the continual emergence and development of *new* forms of power which could not reasonably be understood as having been 'appropriated' prior to modernity. Now, it could be argued that such new forms of power and capability – from industrial technology to the 'machinery' of the state – were never in the hands of the 'multitude' and were only ever a direct product of the ingenuity of capital and of those elites who consolidated their authority through the mechanisms of government. On the other hand, following Hardt and Negri's perspective, it could also be argued that even such technologies as these were always either dependent upon the creative and communicative activity of the multitude for their efficacy, or only came into existence as attempts to regulate and organise the mobility and activity of its constituent elements.[12]

The trouble with this response is that, once again, it appears to deny anything but a reactive role to capitalists, statesmen and monarchs. Refusing to allow that such figures do exercise some influence over historical events seems a difficult position to sustain, at least in its most extreme form. One way to accommodate this objection would be to propose that Hardt and Negri may be right that a certain creative

dynamism upon which the dislocatory power of capitalism depends is always itself dependent upon the creative collective activity of groups, networks and collectivities which do not exist wholly within, or dependent upon, the institutions and practices of capitalism; but that capitalism and the institutions of government play a frequently decisive strategic role in creating, delimiting and determining the *conditions* under which such activity takes place, while also appropriating, regulating and determining the nature of its products to a greater or lesser degree.[13] So while it may be the co-operative labour of the workers that makes the industrial revolution possible, it is nonetheless the capitalist industrialists who build the factories which organise that activity in such a way that its only outputs can be industrial commodities. While the creative progress of science may depend upon the open collaboration of researchers and their free circulation across the 'smooth space' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988) of an emergent domain of knowledge production which linked the universities of Europe to the courts of the aristocracies and monarchies to the workshops of London, Amsterdam and Genoa, those researchers remained forever dependent upon governmental, aristocratic or commercial resources for their survival. Crucially, however, this is not to deny that the *possibility* of the independence of such institutions was always already implicit in their evident ability to innovate and to communicate. From the perspective which I am trying to develop here, we might even say that the real possibility and the real danger of a free circulation of ideas and collaborative practices was always implicit in the specific forms which the governmental and regulatory institutions of modern societies took.

This perspective offers a particular way of understanding the relationship between the history of modernity and that of the disciplinary institutions with which Foucault was concerned. Fundamental to Foucault's account of the emergence of 'disciplinary' society is his observation that institutions such as the prison, the Victorian school, the army barracks, the asylum and the clinic all operate according to a segregative logic which works to divide and separate populations into individual, preferably non-communicating units. While Foucault himself tends not to stress this point,[14] it is clear enough that we can see in this history the persistence of a particular fear: the fear of what might happen if the potential power of the vast

collectivities which industrial and urban modernity was bringing into being were to actualise itself concretely; and, crucially, an awareness of how such actualisation might best be avoided. The prevention of lateral communication between the constituent elements of the collectivity and its perpetual disaggregation into individual units are the basic mechanics of the disciplinary inhibition of this potential power which we can only call 'democratic'.

Seen from this point of view, the history of modernity can be understood as having been shaped by several distinct but interrelated processes. On the one hand, it is the history of the dislocatory force of capitalism as such, of the sheer 'creative destruction' (Schumpeter 1950) that is the direct consequence of the relentless search for new markets, new commodities and new sources of profit, with all of the ensuing environmental, technological, social, cultural and political effects. On the other it is the history of the expanded powers over all those domains which the modern technological and institutional revolutions made possible: from the growth of centralised state apparatuses, to the emergence of global transport and telecommunications networks, to the development of modern medicine. On the one hand it is the history of the deployment of that power according to disciplinary and sovereign logics, in order to reinforce the power of capital, of social elites, and of governmental and quasi-governmental institutions. On the other hand, it is the story of the expanding realm of freedom and of collective potential which Hardt and Negri call the 'first modernity', which is closely related to what Claude Lefort (and after him, Laclau and Mouffe) call the 'democratic revolution' (Lefort 1981: 42–83, Laclau and Mouffe 1985). Finally, and most importantly for us, it is also the story of emergent and relatively democratic collectives finding ways to inhabit and make use of the institutions of government in order to bring modern forms of power to bear on the regulation, direction, limitation – even, at times, the abolition – of capitalism itself.

This is a point which is not often drawn out in commentary on Foucault's historiography, although it is not itself original at all. One of the possibilities which was always implicit in the development of governmental institutions, as well as in many of the technological advances of the modern epoch, was that they could be used not only to regulate and discipline modern populations; instead they might

themselves become tools by which those populations could regulate and discipline the behaviour of the agents of capital, whose relative power depends upon their complete freedom of manoeuvre. Of course this is not a new observation, since this was precisely the assumption of the socialist and communist movements from the mid nineteenth century onwards: the *Communist Manifesto* clearly expresses the hope that the organised proletariat will be able to use and even to extend the machinery of the state in order to curb bourgeois power (Marx and Engels 1967), while the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China – before its swerve into neoliberalism at the beginning of the 1980s (Harvey 2005) – became in practice the greatest attempts to implement this idea in a concrete form. Indeed, from a certain perspective, 'actually existing socialism' clearly represented the most perfect expression yet attempted of the basic democratic idea: the community taking collective control of its own destiny.

The fundamental problem with the Communist vision of democracy was its assumption that the collective in question was essentially simple, unitary and homogeneous in nature, such that political contestation, disagreement and experimentation were not necessary to the full expression of its shared will and the pursuit of its common interests. As such, 'actually existing socialism' was simply unable to adapt to the post-Fordist world, wherein a reinvigorated capitalism found itself able to exacerbate and to thrive on an increasing *complexification* of social relations and an ever-expanding series of democratic demands from increasingly deterritorialised populations. Exactly the same problem faced the institutions of political and social democracy in the capitalist world, many of which suffered to a lesser degree from precisely the same weaknesses as the Soviet institutions: bureaucratic, inflexible and centralised, they found it increasingly difficult to maintain effectiveness or social legitimacy as the twentieth century wore on and the demands of their constituents became ever more complex and diverse. At the same time, the great social liberalisation of the late twentieth century – the weakening of systems of social regulation of personal behaviour which has characterised cultures around the world, sometimes provoking 'fundamentalist' reaction and sometimes simply transforming everyday life into an exhilarating but bewildering panoply of choices – suggests that almost all of the

disciplinary and governmental institutions of the modern period have lost some of their efficacy during this time.

Control Societies

This theme is one that is taken up by Gilles Deleuze in a famous essay that has been drawn on recently by a number of perceptive commentators. In his 'Postscript on Control Societies' (Deleuze 1995), Deleuze argues that the characteristic regulatory mechanisms of disciplinary societies are giving way to different types of 'control' mechanism which operate more through anticipatory systems and flexible patterns of micro-regulation than through the ordered structures described by Foucault. Indeed, Maurizio Lazzarato sees Foucault's accounts of disciplinary society as almost purely historical, with elements of 'control society' beginning to emerge in the early part of the twentieth century and significantly displacing the major disciplinary institutions by the end of it (Lazzarato 2009). This argument fits very neatly into the picture we are developing here. On this account, the institutions of government which emerged during the modern period – institutions which always had both authoritarian and democratic potentialities – were appropriate to the regulation of industrial production and of that form of capitalism which was dependent upon it; but they have proved unadaptable to the cybernetic speed of post-Fordist production, or the hyper-complexity of the social changes which it tends to induce. At the same time, they could not accommodate the expanding desires of the multitude as it explored the very creative and experimental potential which the modern extension of human power had made possible and which capital needed both to cultivate and control if this new stage of accumulation were to be fully realised. The result: a tremendous growth and multiplication of personal freedoms and experiments in lifestyle has accompanied a general decline in the institutions both of social authority and of political and social democracy, and in particular an apparently devastating assault on all of the institutions and movements which once sought to oppose or even merely to contain the entire system of capital accumulation.

As such, it is not at all surprising that those at the cutting edge of radical and anti-capitalist 'political experiments' (Lazzarato 2009) have, in recent years, prioritised the exploration of organisational

techniques which – unlike those of traditional labour organisation, still firmly tied to the historic project of democratising the institutions of Fordist industrial capitalism and disciplinary government – could exploit the creative dynamism of contemporary communicative technologies, matching the flexibility and adaptability of post-Fordist capitalism. The social forums, the summit protests, the campaigns by casualised workers have all to some extent involved a mobilisation of techniques whose participatory and non-hierarchical ideals are not new, having a long history in the libertarian leftist tradition and having been instantiated very effectively by movements such as the women's movement in the early 1970s, but which have acquired a new salience under current conditions (Maeckelbergh 2009). However, what is most striking about these endeavours, viewed from a certain angle, is their relative continuity with the democratic struggles of the previous epoch. For while their contexts and instruments may have altered, in both eras it is a related tendency towards individualisation and towards the concentration of power – the two key tendencies, in fact, of capitalism at its most abstract – which democratic movements are forced to contest. Under Fordist conditions, as to some extent under pre-Fordist industrial conditions, democratic struggle became a question of deploying the regulatory power of the new institutions of government in order to curtail and redirect the power of industrial capital. In each case what was required was action aimed at building up institutions of collective action and co-responsibility, which necessarily reversed the segregative and individualising logic that characterised the 'classic' disciplinary institutions studied by Foucault. Today, despite radically changed circumstances, a certain modulation of this classic double logic remains precisely what contemporary forms of radical democracy must deliberately work to circumvent. On the one hand, the individualising logic of contemporary consumer culture and much of public policy is indicative of a certain abstract continuity (despite obvious differences which we will discuss) with the forms of individualisation typical of industrial modernity and is the first obstacle which any attempt to realise collective power of any kind must overcome. On the other hand, the tendency of 'network' capitalism to concentrate power and authority at particular privileged 'nodes' (corporate headquarters, hedge funds, media outlets, and so on) (Terranova 2004) has to be constantly worked against by efforts

to develop transparency and opportunities for participation at every possible level of decision making.[15]

This situation gives rise to a complex set of continuities and discontinuities. On the one hand, the great struggle of the Fordist era was for the democratisation of the very governmental and institutional institutions upon which Fordism depended, by means of their capture by the state on behalf of the working class. On the other hand, the double logic of 'panoptical' power and bureaucratic segregation of the population – which Foucault identified as characteristic of disciplinary institutions – by no means ceased to operate under such circumstances. In fact the danger that this logic would only operate all the more implacably once the power of the state was not checked by the power of capital always haunted the attempt to democratise and socialise disciplinary institutions, just as left communist, anarchist, radical democratic and even liberal democratic critics had always warned it might. Members of these traditions had always maintained that totalitarianism would be the likely consequence of any attempt to transform the class dynamics of capitalism while mirroring its organisational strategies, and the eventual fate of Russian Communism testifies to the perspicacity of such warnings.[16]

Contemporary radical tendencies situate themselves in opposition to the disciplinary dynamic of classical 'revolutionary' projects – the democratic centralism of the Leninist tradition – and to the bureaucratic paternalism of traditional Fordist social democracy, in their avowed preference for horizontal over vertical relations in all possible contexts. But what complicates the picture is that this is a theme also taken up in post-Fordist management theory, which expresses precisely the same preference (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). So is this simply a matter of history repeating itself? Can we draw a direct parallel between the adoption of 'Fordist' techniques and organisational strategies by socialists and the adoption of post-Fordist modes of networked social organisation by contemporary anti-capitalists? Not exactly. In the post-Fordist context, both capital and its democratic opponents have realised the creative power of horizontality, such that its meaning and implementation are surely among the key political battlegrounds of the twenty-first century. But it is important not to fall into the glib trap of imagining that all we are seeing today is a mirror image of the struggles of the Fordist era. For one thing, it is not clear that 'control

society' generates institutions which are amenable to any form of even partial democratisation, as were those of disciplinary society: in fact it is not clear that control society generates institutions at all, tending instead to rely on disaggregated sets of mechanisms and processes which arguably militate against the crystallisation and mobilisation of any kind of collective intention whatsoever. The society of 'Empire', as Hardt and Negri call it, has no centre, no Winter Palace whose capture would in itself amount to a decisive victory for radical forces. These mechanisms and processes themselves possess obvious democratic potential: just think of the huge communicative and organisational possibilities opened up by the Internet and mobile telephony. But our line of reasoning thus far would seem to indicate that the invention of institutions which can realise this potential remains a key task for progressive politics in the twenty-first century, and one which cannot simply be understood in terms of a return to the twentieth-century project to democratise the existing institutions of government. This is why traditions which argued for the invention of wholly new democratic institutions – workers' councils, productive co-operatives, autonomous collectives – today acquire a new salience.

This observation draws attention to the fact that the realisation of democracy is always, to some extent, a *technical* problem. Enabling anything as complex, mobile, disparate and contradictory as a group of people to come to a coherent view on anything, let alone to act upon that decision, when there might well exist significant physical, social and psychological obstacles to doing so, will always require not just formal procedures, but ensembles of techniques and a physical infrastructure which renders those techniques implementable. Even the Athenian assembly needed the *Pnyx*, the meeting place where the citizenry could gather and debate, while modern democracy would have been impossible without the techniques of mass communication and transport enabling information about issues, candidacies and elections to be shared over great distances (Anderson 2006). Indeed, we might say that the problem of democracy is never simply that of making collective decisions, but is also, indissolubly, the problem of bringing 'the collective' into being at all. The process of allowing the general condition of collectivity to realise itself even momentarily in the form of an agency capable of making a decision is, by definition, a technical operation, an exercise of skill dependent on the competent

deployment of tools and techniques. With this in view, we can argue that democratic practice since the 1970s has clearly failed to keep up with the complexity and fluidity of social relations under advanced capitalism. But we should also observe that the wave of attempts to develop such practice in the early 1970s – attempts which included *autogestion*, the radical forms of self-organisation typical of the women's movement, the squatting movement of north-west Europe (including west London, where much of British 'punk' was incubated by the squatting and anarchist movements of that moment), the experiments in democratic communality which are now so often derided in memory,[17] the communal self-defence of the Black Panthers, the experimental militancy of Italian *operaismo* and so on, carrying on even into the attempts at radical municipal government typical of many cities in the 1980s – did not merely fizzle out, but were defeated by the global neoliberal assault, which began with the US-backed coup against Allende's elected socialist government in Chile in 1973. Indeed, capitalism has only become 'advanced' by pillaging and retooling the techniques of these, its defeated enemies: this, precisely, is the story of 'post-Fordism' (Hardt and Negri 2000, Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, Gilbert 2008a).

Accounts of contemporary capitalism and its culture tend to diverge radically in their understanding of its fundamental tendencies. On the one hand, it is quite clear that neoliberal practice is dependent on, and must actively reproduce, an individualist ideology which normalises competitive market relations as the paradigmatic form of human interaction and which imposes its norms where they do not spontaneously arise; for example, forcing public-service workers and users to adopt them whether they want to or not. Hardt and Negri, on the other hand, emphasise the extent to which capitalism today, more than ever before, depends upon the creative and communicative power of dense and global webs of interaction between the constituent singularities of 'the multitude', while Boltanski and Chiapello emphasise the fact that the ideal operative of contemporary capitalism is not an isolated entrepreneur but a successful networker, carefully collecting and calibrating contacts on a project-by-project basis. These accounts, however, are far from contradictory. For example, Hardt and Negri pay little or no attention to the ideological dimension of contemporary culture, focussing almost entirely on general social

tendencies and the political potentialities of the most technically and socially advanced capitalist forms. But it is easy enough to supplement their position with the following observation: the more capitalism is forced to organise, enable and harness the collective creativity of the multitudinous millions, the more ideological work it must do in order to *prevent* the democratic potential of the multitude from being realised. Of course 'ideology' should not be understood here in terms of a simply semantic or conscious dimension of social reality, but as the field within which certain elements of real lived experience are given expression, meaning and both conscious and unconscious priority over others, and within which subject positions – the positions from which subjects are enabled to act – are constituted (Althusser 1971). The tendency of capitalism to promote individualism, competition and commodification is not merely illusory; it really does reward such behaviours in tangible ways, just as neoliberal institutions really do promote conformity to their logics.

In fact, what we see here is simply the latest manifestation of what Marx identified as the fundamental contradiction of capitalism: between its tendency to socialise *production* and its tendency to individualise and privatise *consumption*, promoting an individualistic and alienated experience of the life-world, even while making possible a vast collectivisation of the real activity of making and remaking the world. The ideal 'networker' as described by Boltanski and Chiapello lives this contradiction at the highest pitch of ambivalence: constantly on the lookout for new collaborations and contacts, prepared to jettison any relationship at a moment's notice as soon as it becomes unprofitable. Facebook is only the most popular institutional instantiation of this ideal. In order to secure the ongoing hegemony of finance capital and its key allies, neoliberalism must ensure that this ambivalence is lived, at least by strategically crucial constituencies, as exciting, amusing, liberating, and desirable; and by other constituencies it must at least be experienced as unavoidable, unchangeable, a fact of life. But in all cases it must be experienced as confirming the basic assumption that competitive and individualised social relations are normal, desirable and inevitable, as the various modulations of capitalist ideology have all done since the seventeenth century. Today, the key challenge for radical democratic forces is surely to activate this ambivalence in a different way, to enable it to be experienced as the condition of

possibility of another world, in which the creative potential of the collective is realised beyond the limits set by capital accumulation and individual competition.

It is clear enough that democratic institutions inherited from the moment of Fordism cannot make such an experience possible today: in frustrating it, they increasingly contribute to the general sense of collectivity's impossibility, of its inevitable, chaotic impotence. At the same time, the neoliberal control machines – mechanisms of government, mediation and education, in particular – function in very different ways to the pre-democratic institutions of disciplinary government, but to exactly the same end: to neutralise the danger that the collective power which capital must help come into being might realise its democratic potential, by ensuring that its subjects remain isolated and therefore impotent. This, ultimately, is the problem which any democratic politics must work to solve today: the problem of how to overcome these multiple tendencies towards disaggregation and individualisation in order to enable collective decisions to be taken and to be rendered potent and effective. Very little of contemporary democratic theory actually seems to address this issue. This is not just a question of making democracy more 'inclusive', because it is not clear that existing democratic institutions are capable of becoming effective on these terms, whosoever they include or exclude. It is not simply a matter of enabling a greater plurality of voices to be heard, because the condition of post-democratic postmodernity makes clear that it is quite possible for the cacophonous plurality of the public sphere to be extended indefinitely without effective collective agencies ever stabilising for long enough to disturb the smooth operation of liberal capitalism.[18] It is in part a matter, as Nick Couldry (2010) has recently suggested, of giving a 'voice' to those who have none; and 'voice' must be understood here in terms not just of a right to speak and to be heard, but of a right actually to take part in the decisions which affect the speaker. It is in part a question of acknowledging and making visible the real antagonisms at work in a society in which they are often hidden – as they so often have been throughout history – behind the implicit and explicit claims of the elite to act in the best interests of all. But above all, it is a matter of making possible instances of what Bernard Stiegler – following Simondon – calls 'collective individuation' (Crépon and Stiegler 2007): that is to say, instances wherein groups,

on whatever scale, can (however temporarily) achieve the capacity to co-ordinate their interests, resolve their disagreements, and intervene together in the fabric of the world.

The obvious question which emerges here is the same one that was raised by the end of the Preface: why haven't new forms of democracy emerged, except among the most marginal and militant sections of the world's population, given the evident redundancy of the old ones and the techno-social possibility of the new? One important historical answer has already been offered in this chapter: it was precisely the demand for such new forms of democracy which was violently suppressed by the neoliberal capture of the post-Fordist terrain. It is time now, therefore to examine this proposition in more detail. In particular, we must consider the ways in which the mechanics of neoliberalism work to inhibit the emergence of any potent collectivity whatsoever. At the same time, it will be necessary to situate neoliberalism in a much larger historical context, and to consider the extent to which it inherits a much older set of assumptions about the relationship between the individual and the collective, assumptions which are shared by many strands of political thought which might think themselves otherwise opposed to the entire project of neoliberalism. This will be the task of the coming chapters.

2

A War of All Against All: Neoliberal Hegemony and Competitive Individualism

Neoliberal Culture

In the last chapter, I suggested that democracy should be defined in terms of its capacity to enable potent collectivities – groups capable of acting together in an effective way – to form, take decisions, and act upon them. I also explored the hypothesis that the 'postmodern condition' of cultural fragmentation must be understood as undermining the social bases for existing forms of institutionalised democracy, which depend for their efficacy on the existence of very large, homogeneous and relatively static constituencies. One implication of this argument is that any effective democratic responses to the challenges of the twenty-first century must develop systems of collective decision making which are responsive to the fluidity and complexity of contemporary forms of belonging and identification, through the institutionalisation of far more ongoing, widespread and involved participation in decision making by all constituent groups and individuals at various levels than is allowed for by parliamentary and presidential systems of representation.

However, it is not only the complexification of social relations which has rendered older democratic systems increasingly ineffective: at least two other key factors have been at work here. One which we

have already touched on in the previous chapter has been the simple success of social elites – above all, finance capital and its operatives – in re-establishing, extending and entrenching power which had been eroded during the middle decades of the twentieth century (Harvey 2005). This is a very important observation which is worth making again, because it underlines the extent to which the relative success of both political and social democracy during those decades had always been partially dependent upon the organisational capacity, relative success, and imagined threat posed by militant organised labour: there is very little question that the need to stave of the threat of working-class disaffection and possible revolution focussed the minds of some of the most imaginative and intelligent members of the ruling class on the need for effective but partial reforms throughout this epoch (for example, Keynes 1927), and that the waning of this perceived threat has emboldened elites increasingly to ignore, undermine and bypass democratic institutions in recent years.

While all of these mechanisms will be explored further in this book, this chapter is concerned with perhaps the single most important process by which the interests of the commercial elite have been promoted against all those of other constituencies, and against the general efficacy of democratic practices and institutions. That process involves the promotion of a mode of social life according to which people are encouraged to identify themselves and to relate to others purely as individuals, rather than as members of groups or collectivities of any kind, and in which competitive market relations are treated as the normal model for all types of social interaction (Bauman 2001, Curtis 2013). This individualist conception of human life is promoted in a classically ideological fashion, informing a range of discourses and practices, from education policy to popular television programming, wherein it is presented, not as a particular way of looking at the world, but as simple common sense (cf. Gramsci 1971). At the same time, it is both enabled and enforced by the logic of capitalist social relations in general and by institutional practices which, at their most extreme, impose competitive market relations on social situations where they do not occur spontaneously, even where participants are reluctant to engage in them. We are told time and again – by reality TV shows as by ministers for education (Benn 2011, Ouellette and Hay 2008) – that the way for individuals and nations to achieve happiness and

prosperity is for all citizens to be enabled and encouraged, even obliged, to compete with each other ruthlessly for rewards, thus encouraging initiative, enterprise and self-reliance amongst the competitors; many of us also experience labour-market conditions and institutional pressures which oblige us to conform to this model even if we are not consciously persuaded of its virtues. This is a tendency in political thought and social practice which both supporters and critics have associated with the rise of capitalism and commercial society at least since the seventeenth century, but which has taken what is arguably its strongest historical form in the project of neoliberalism, which has shaped so much of world culture and politics since the 1970s.

Competitive Individualism

The rest of this chapter will be concerned with understanding the bases, parameters and implications of this set of ideas and practices, which I will call 'competitive individualism'.[1] 'Individualism' is a term which notoriously means different things to different people (Lukes 1977), as does its root word 'individual' (Williams 1976: 161–5), and I am not going to attempt an exhaustive genealogy of it here,[2] but will specify those features of it which are particularly pertinent to our discussion. For my purposes, individualism is not primarily a moral or ethical category, but an ontological, phenomenological and epistemological one. It understands the singular human being as the basic unit of all experience, and in naming that being 'individual' it makes a particular set of assumptions about its nature and about its relationships to the world and to others. The original meaning of 'individual' is literally 'that which cannot be divided' (Williams 1976), which tells us a great deal about what the concept implies. Properly speaking, the term 'individual' not only expresses the singular uniqueness of the person (or object) it describes, but also implies that that uniqueness is dependent upon its indivisible nature, hence upon something which is absolutely intrinsic to it and not at all a function of its relations with others. The concept therefore implies both an inherent simplicity and an ontological autarchy: a radical independence which is the most fundamental feature of the person or object.[3]

What characterises individualism then is its implicit belief that social relations are not constitutive of the person and their most fundamental

forms of experience. Individuals are not the product of social relations. Social relations are things that *happen to* individuals rather than things which actually define their identity and the co-ordinates of their existence. Individuals may enter into social relations – most forms of individualist thought would even be willing to admit that few human beings could survive without doing so – but within the horizon of individualist thought, social relations can never be thought of actually constituting the in-dividual. If only on an abstract existential level, individuals are not fundamentally shaped or altered by those relations, of which they remain ultimately independent.

A number of other assumptions and conclusions follow from these. Firstly, the belief that subjectivity – the experience of selfhood – is defined by a strict demarcation between the public self, which enters into observable relations with others, and the private self, whose interior space is ultimately inaccessible to anyone else, but which defines the authentic experience of the subject in the most fundamental way (Burckhardt 1995: 51–4, McKeon 2005). This remains a hotly debated topic amongst anthropologists and cultural historians, but there are good reasons for suspecting that the modern assumption that our 'interior' lives are in some sense where the truth of our selves is to be located, rather than being relatively trivial elements of our experience, is largely a modern invention, which has roots in the Christian confessional (Foucault 1978: 61–5) and early Protestant spiritual practice, but only really comes to fruition with the development of Romanticism (Campbell 1987), modern forms of narrative (Watt 1957, McKeon 2002), and twentieth-century 'depth psychology' (Rose 1990).[4] If the cultural records that we have are anything to go by, members of other cultures and inhabitants of other eras seem to have been concerned far less with their own private experiences than with their public and social lives.

Many thinkers, both conservative and radical, have tried to problematise the modern, Western, individualist model of subjectivity and to propose alternatives to it, and some of those will be discussed later in this book. For now, what is important is that the individualist model tends to have a number of further implications, insofar as its privileging of the private, interior domain of experience tends to posit the individual self as the key source of most of our capacities to act in the world – to innovate, decide and create. Commercial success is

understood to be largely the result of the entrepreneurial acumen and endeavour of particular individuals, rather than of the shared labour of many or of the strategic ability of elites to organise that labour to their own advantage. 'Creativity' is understood to be a quality possessed by talented individuals rather than by groups. Rational decision making is assumed to be best undertaken by solitary individuals, calculating their interests in methodical isolation from those of others, whereas deliberative groups are generally assumed to be irrational and inefficient by nature (Surowiecki 2005). This is a very important issue for any attempt to think about the nature of democracy, because the assumption that agency, creativity and rationality are qualities which pertain to individuals but not to groups poses severe problems for any attempt to base a politics on the possibility of collective decision making.

What also follows from these ideas is the assumption that what is private to the individual subject must be protected from interference by others, and that those social relations which the individual subject enters into must be voluntary, limited and carefully regulated. In fact there is a very strong argument for suggesting that this has been the basic postulate of mainstream Western political thought since the seventeenth century. This becomes particularly clear if we reflect that 'what is private to the individual subject' need not be restricted to interior thoughts and subjective experiences, but can include all types of objects of which the individual retains exclusive use: in other words, private property. From such a perspective, it becomes logical to understand the individual's right to private property as the ineradicable basis for all social relations and interactions, as that on which all political arrangements must be based and which they must necessarily protect. It also becomes logical to understand all social relations as necessarily limited, regulated and voluntary in nature: in other words, as contracts. This, in fact, is the basis for the entire tradition of political liberalism.

On the Stupidity of Individualism

Before proceeding any further, it is probably useful for me to explain why I cannot accept the most basic premises of any individualism, simply on a logical level. Consider, in the simplest possible terms, the

most basic postulate of individualism: the independent autonomy of the individual. Perhaps this is best summed up in the Canadian artist Emily Carr's famous comment in her journal of 1933: 'You come into the world alone and you go out of the world alone' (2006: 69). This is a widely repeated phrase, a cliché of twentieth-century individualist culture, and yet at least its first assertion is in a certain sense demonstrably false. Nobody comes into the world alone. Their mother is always already there, and there is no known culture in which it has ever been normal for the mother and child to be unattended by other members of the community (Klein 1984). This brute fact of human life concretises a more abstract reality: that every person is born into a set of social relations which pre-exist them and which at least partially define the very possibility of their biological existence.[5]

The necessarily relational nature of human existence clearly extends beyond the basic biological level as well. Culture as such is nothing but a set of relations of various kinds: relations between individuals and groups, relations mediated by custom, by symbolic and non-symbolic forms of communication, between past, present and future. If we consider the issue of agency and creativity, which both the liberal political tradition and post-Romantic ideas about art and expressive culture resolutely attribute as properties of individuals (Williams 1958), we can see again the simply logical problems with individualist assumptions. The human capacity to act alone in the world is incredibly limited. For one thing, as various philosophers have reflected, humans are simply not equipped to survive without the use of tools and technologies of various kinds. Not just Homo sapiens sapiens, but several of its hominid ancestors, have relied on tools throughout their history as species, and even the most basic technologies are constituted by an accumulation of techniques which can be understood to amount to a kind of shared artificial memory: a heritage and a culture into which humans are born and outside which they cannot physically survive (Stiegler 1998). Our capacity to act in the world is therefore always dependent upon our participation in a complex network of relationships.

Along the same lines, at the political level, it is surely accurate to say that there is no meaningful reality to concepts such as 'individual freedom' or 'individual power'. This is not merely to repeat the classic distinction between 'negative liberty' and 'positive liberty',

which distinguishes between freedom understood as the absence of constraints, and freedom understood as the positive capacity to act (Berlin 1966). It is rather to observe that neither of these notions of freedom has any meaning except in the context of a set of social relationships. Traditionally, most conceptions of positive liberty, or most conceptions of freedom which could be characterised as such (the term itself only goes back to the work of Isaiah Berlin), have stressed the importance of various forms of co-operation and collaboration in enabling humans to exercise any capacities that they might have. My point here is that while this stress is clearly valid, even 'negative' liberty is not exercisable in any meaningful way outside of such relationships. Unless an individual is actually capable of producing all of the basic tools they require for survival (and even then, they can only have learned to do so by virtue of someone else having taught them) and wishes to pursue a wholly solitary life through the exercise of those skills, then freedom as such is never meaningful as a simple property of an individual: after all, what would one do with one's freedom at all outside of such relations? Rather, freedom is surely not an index of a person's simple autonomy from all possible relationships, but rather of the range and scope of possible relationships into which they can enter. By the same token, as Foucault famously showed, 'power' cannot be usefully conceived as a property which individuals or institutions 'possess', because power only functions in the context of relationships (1978: 92–102). After all, political 'power' as normally conceived is nothing but the capacity to influence the behaviour of others, through whatever means (Lukes 2005).

Exploring the implications of these propositions will be the task of later chapters, however. For now, it is important that we examine in some more detail the political and philosophical career of individualist ideas, particularly in the Anglophone liberal tradition.

Hobbes and the Liberal Tradition

We can best get a sense of what is at stake in this mode of thought by considering the political theory of its founding figure: Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes has always been an intriguing and controversial figure, whose sheer intellectual ambition and originality remain impressive to this day, however we may judge his conclusions and their implications.

Long before the continental Enlightenment, Hobbes, like his fellow Englishman and near contemporary Francis Bacon (Bacon 2000), sought to refound an entire area of thought on the basis of rational observation and logical argument, dismissing centuries of previous political theory as based on little more than irrational supposition and traditional authority (Hobbes 1996: 27–33). For our purposes here, what is fascinating about Hobbes is that he argued from precisely the premises which I have just described, even though what he wanted to argue for was not some kind of libertarian society, but in fact the opposite. Hobbes famously argues for the right of monarchs (or, arguably, any form of sovereign government) to exercise absolute, unlimited and unaccountable power over their subjects. And yet he argues for this on the basis of precisely such an individualist set of assumptions, by claiming that societies are constituted by the individuals which compose them entering into a contract with each other, by which they each voluntarily surrender their own sovereignty – or a portion thereof – and delegate it to a central authority. Rather than arguing for the divine right of kings to rule as God's appointees, or, in line with Renaissance political theory, that the sovereign's legitimacy derives at least in part from their capacity to represent and tend to the common good (Ferguson 1955), Hobbes argues from this strictly individualist set of presuppositions, assuming that the ontological starting point for all social relations is a set of autonomous and unrelated individuals.

But why, according to Hobbes, do these individuals enter into this social contract – surrendering their freedom to the tyrannical sovereign – to begin with? It is here that we see how closely Hobbes seems to prefigure contemporary competitive individualism, for his assumption is that without entering into some such compact, the rapacious appetites of others will simply prevent any given individual from enjoying their property in peace. This view is expressed in Hobbes's famous description of the 'state of nature' as 'a war of all against all' (1949: 13), and his assertion that 'the natural condition of mankind' is 'such a war, as is of every man, against every man' (1996: 84). For Hobbes, it is necessary for individuals to cede their sovereignty to a central authority in order to prevent other sovereign individuals from robbing and murdering them, and Hobbes's assumption is that this will be the likely result if they do not. For Hobbes, competition between

individuals for scarce resources would be the natural condition of human existence if humans did not enter into a social contract of the crudest and most draconian type.

Some points of clarification are necessary if we are to avoid caricaturing Hobbes. Firstly, it is not at all clear that Hobbes actually believes his 'state of nature' ever to have been a historic or even prehistoric reality. This is just as well for Hobbes or any of his sympathisers, given that no historical or anthropological evidence supports any such hypothesis:[6] if anything characterises the most 'primitive' forms of society that we know about, it is their resemblance to what Marx and Engels famously called 'primitive communism', as well as their lack of any singular or centralised authority (Clastres 1987, Everett 2009, Engels 2010). The apparently co-operative, egalitarian and democratic character of such societies certainly poses a powerful argument against Hobbes's hypothesis, and yet it is possible – just – to rescue it in the face of such evidence, if that theory is understood at an appropriate level of abstraction. So the Hobbesian retort to this anthropological objection might be that in such a situation, it is the group itself and its customs which takes on the role of sovereign,[7] but that this in no way invalidates the observation that without such sovereignty being constituted at the expense of the freedom of the individuals in the group, that 'war of all against all' would no doubt ensue. Secondly, Hobbes must be given credit for his attempt to refound political thought on principles other than those which had previously informed it, which assumed as they did the divinely ordained nature of the social order and of the rules governing human interaction.

The whole tradition of liberal thought and practice – from the writings of John Locke to the framing of the US constitution, from Mill's *On Liberty* to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, from the first welfare reforms of the nineteenth century to Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1972)[8] – can be understood in part as an ongoing attempt to refute Hobbes's authoritarian conclusions without challenging his individualist premises. This history can be usefully described as a series of attempts to demonstrate that the institution of an absolutist monarchy is by no means the only rational and viable exit from Hobbes's 'state of nature', and that some measure of collective decision making, shared responsibility and governmental accountability can be rendered compatible with the defence of private property and the rights

of the individual person. And yet what has remained unchallenged throughout this history has been Hobbes's basic individualist presuppositions: that the autonomous individual is the basic unit of human experience; that human beings are by nature acquisitive and therefore – in a world of scarce resources and unequal rewards – competitive; that any theory or practice of politics must be predicated on these assumptions.

In fact, Hobbesian individualism as I have described it here is almost precisely coterminous with what C.B. Macpherson famously calls 'the political theory of possessive individualism',[9] whose fundamental postulates he gives as follows:

(i) What makes a man human is freedom from dependence on the will of others.
(ii) Freedom from dependence on others means freedom from any relations with others except those relations into which the individual enters voluntarily with a view to his own interest.
(iii) The individual is essentially the proprietor of his own person and capacities, for which he owes nothing to society ...
(iv) Although the individual cannot alienate the whole of his property in his own person, he may alienate his capacity to labor.
(v) Human society consists of a series of market relations ...
(vi) Since freedom from the wills of others is what makes a man human, each individual's freedom can rightfully be limited only by such obligations and rules as are necessary to secure the same freedom for others.
(vii) Political society is a human contrivance for the protection of the individual's property in his person and goods, and (therefore) for the maintenance of orderly relations of exchange between individuals regarded as proprietors of themselves. (Macpherson 1962: 263–4)

It is notable that Macpherson does not actually include the assumption of competitiveness in this list, despite its centrality to Hobbes's conception and the fact that Macpherson clearly identifies Hobbes as the first true theorist of possessive individualism. There are at least two possible reasons for this, both of them good ones. The first is that Macpherson is not only excavating the core elements of Hobbes's

philosophy, but identifying those elements in it which can be shown to be shared by all of Hobbes's liberal successors; amongst those successors, the status of competition and competitiveness is somewhat more ambiguous than it is in Hobbes. The second is that Macpherson was writing in the early 1960s, at the very peak of the Fordist, social-democratic epoch, when a strong emphasis on co-operation, teamwork, corporate efficiency and social partnership was central to the discourse even of the leading sections of capital (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005): as such it is not surprising that Macpherson should have left out of this basic summary of possessive individualism any reference to competition. It is ironic to reflect that although we are now half a century further away from Hobbes's time than Macpherson was, Hobbes's description of the state of nature seems far more clearly applicable to our own culture than to his. This is not to suggest that Macpherson was in any way mistaken. In fact it rather suggests that he was correct to identify the persistence of those specific postulates that he did as the fundamental co-ordinates of possessive individualism, and that the relative status of competition within that tradition is a significant variable, worth paying some specific attention to.

This is precisely the issue which Michel Foucault argues as marking the key point of distinction between neoliberalism and classical liberalism. According to Foucault, post-war American neoliberalism and German 'ordoliberalism' are distinctive for their particular emphasis on the value of competition between individuals in driving them and the society which they compose to maximise their efficiency, creativity and self-discipline (2008: 121). Foucault adds a crucial observation to this analysis in observing that the neoliberals, unlike earlier generations of liberals – and unlike Hobbes – are not confident that the condition of appetitive, entrepreneurial individualism is in fact a natural one for human beings, desirable as they believe it to be. The implication of this is that governments may have to take measures to *encourage* such attitudes and behaviours in citizens. As we shall see, this assumption has clearly been crucial to the development of neoliberal policy since the 1970s, and it marks a key difference with the laissez-faire approach to government recommended by the classical liberalism of the Enlightenment and the nineteenth century (Smith 2008, Perkin 1972). Whereas the latter assumed that, left to their own devices, without interference, encouragement or protection from

government, individuals would spontaneously organise themselves into market relationships which would ultimately be beneficial to all, facilitating a benign division of labour and disposition of rewards throughout society, the neoliberals – living in the age of communism, fascism and social democracy – feared that left to their own devices, individuals would congregate into authoritarian collectivities which would oppress and stifle all attempts at innovation, or at least would degenerate into dependent complacency under the tutelage of an over-protective welfare state (Lazzarato 2009: 26–61).

Clearly laissez-faire liberalism was itself informed by principles somewhat different from those that underpinned either neoliberalism or the raw possessive individualism of Hobbes.[10] Locke and Smith, for example, presented views of human nature and commercial society according to which a society based on market relations and founded on possessive individualism need not necessarily be ruthlessly competitive at all levels (Locke 2000, Smith 2009). Smith, in particular, while being the great classical advocate for the social benefits of commercial competition, seems to have envisaged the ultimate goal of such competition as being a society wherein a perfectly balanced division of labour distributed rewards and responsibilities equitably throughout the population. Realising that commerce and trade ultimately depend upon relations of trust and co-operation, such thinkers seem at times to have imagined the possibility of a society based on a *co-operative* individualism of egalitarian market relations. A key element of Karl Marx's intellectual project was to demonstrate that whether or not such a society were hypothetically possible, it was a gross fantasy to imagine that this was actually what bourgeois society looked like or where it was headed (Marx 1971). It remains an interesting point for debate as to how far the evolution of commercial society into capitalist society (characterised by intense concentrations of power, wealth and privilege in the hands of a very few individuals and institutions) was inevitable, and how far it was merely a historical contingency, an outcome of the successful manoeuvring of capitalists – especially in the late nineteenth century when the modern corporation first began to emerge (Bakan 2005) – which might have been avoided. For Marx and for his follower such as Macpherson, as indeed, for other followers of Hegel (Macmurray 1995, for example), the idea of a co-operative individualism would always have been, ultimately, a

logical contradiction, to the extent that relations of co-operation can only be fully appreciated or be fully functional if they are understood as having a constitutive and transformatory effect on the co-operators themselves, who could, if so understood, no longer be conceptualised as 'in-dividuals' in the classic sense described above. The resurgence of a thoroughly Hobbesian view of human nature in neoliberal theory and practice seems to lend some credence to this view, suggesting as it does that fierce and self-interested competition is always likely to be the long-term logical correlate of possessive individualist assumptions.

On the basis of these observations, we can argue that Macpherson is right to posit possessive individualism as the basic productive matrix – what Deleuze and Guattari would call 'the abstract machine' (1988) – of liberal thought, and that competitive individualism can be identified as a particularly intense manifestation of it, to be found in, amongst other places, the thought of Hobbes and the theory and practice of contemporary neoliberalism. We might speculate at this point that the relative weight given to individualised and aggressive forms of competition in the liberal conception of humanity is historically dependent upon the relative accommodations which liberalism has to make to other political traditions and programmes – and, more importantly, to the interests which they express – in particular contexts. Locke's and Smith's vision of mercantile gentility might be interpreted as the outcome of the need to accommodate aristocratic tastes and virtues while fending off conservative critiques which point to the evidently deleterious effect of commercial relations on everyday social intercourse: from the novels of Defoe to the philosophy of Burke to the satire of Swift and Hogarth, rampant commerciality is often portrayed as socially corrosive in early modern culture. The collectivist reformism of Hobhouse (1922), Keynes, Beveridge and Rawls was clearly born in part of the need for the liberal tradition – which never really lost its hegemonic position in the English-speaking world – to make significant accommodations with the demands of organised labour and the ideological challenge of socialism. In more recent times, the early formation of the New Right, as exemplified by the politics of Thatcher and Reagan at the beginning of the 1980s, with its historically peculiar mixture of authoritarian social conservatism and neoliberalism, clearly represented a temporary articulation[11] of the two, constituting a united front against socialism and social

democracy. And since the historic defeats of both Communism and the European labour movement in the 1980s made that united front largely redundant, we have seen the emergence of the 'purest' and most 'Hobbesian' forms of competitive individualism in the history of liberal capitalism.

Neoliberalism and its Abstract Machines

The general and specific features of neoliberalism, as well as its intellectual roots in the writings of Hayek et al., have been well documented and exhaustively analysed elsewhere (Leys 2001, Gilbert 2004a, Harvey 2005, Fisher 2009, and others), so I will offer here only a few illustrative examples of neoliberalism in practice across a range of national and historical contexts. Neoliberal governments have pursued a strikingly consistent set of agendas in many different countries, almost irrespective of the nominal and traditional ideologies of the parties composing them. During the early phase of neoliberal governance in the United Kingdom and the United States, the New Right pursued an agenda combining militarism, 'authoritarian populism' and social conservatism with neoliberal economics (Hall 1988, Gamble 1988). In time it became apparent that the first three elements of this mixture were largely reactions to the specific strategic situation in which neoliberalism found itself: confronting a continued military and ideological obstacle to its global ambitions in the form of the Soviet bloc, forced to rely for political support upon socially conservative constituencies (in particular white suburban homeowners), many of whom would never have voted for them if they had foreseen the social and cultural implications of neoliberal individualism, and requiring consent from those constituencies for some occasionally draconian action against resistant elements (trade unionists in both the public and manufacturing sectors, ethnic minorities in the major cities, the legatees of the counterculture).[12] After the 1990s, these authoritarian tendencies would resurface whenever, but only when, neoliberal governments encountered potential resistance to a regime of government which insisted upon competitive individualism and market-oriented consumerism as the templates for all social relations. The war between the West and militant Islam, for example, has been essentially a conflict between this paradigm and its main ideological

rival outside Latin America, and it is highly significant that at least since Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979, Islamists have themselves often posited Western individualism, liberalism and consumerism as their main cultural antagonists (Crooke 2009). The treatment of protesters against neoliberal policies has remained frequently brutal even in the most 'advanced' countries.[13] However, where they do not conflict with the core individualist agenda, neoliberal governments have been happy to promote socially liberal policies – such as legalising gay marriage, a policy endorsed by both the Obama presidency and David Cameron's Conservative-led coalition government – which would have shocked much of Thatcher's and Reagan's electorates.

In practice the consistent central aims of neoliberal public sector reforms have been to re-organise relationships between service users and 'providers' on the model of retail transactions, to introduce competition between providers within services, to promote an aggressively 'entrepreneurial' ethos amongst the citizenry, and to weaken the authority of local, municipal or sector-specific democratic and deliberative bodies (Olssen, Codd and O'Neill 2004). The governing assumption of such 'reforms' is that the production or mimicking of market relations within any sector of the economy – or indeed, any social situation whatsoever – will generate the best possible outcomes for 'consumers', and that what really disadvantages the poorest members of society is their inability to exercise the same levels of market choice that wealthier citizens can afford. One striking element of this programme has been the strong influence of 'public choice theory' (PCT) on neoliberal policymaking (Finlayson 2003: 111), in particular as it informed what came to be called 'new public management' (Cooke and Muir 2012).

PCT is an approach to the analysis and formation of public policy which assumes social and political actors to be self-interested and competitive individuals seeking to maximise the profitability of any interaction and having no interest in interactions beyond their profitability: in other words, to be classic Hobbesian subjects. Notoriously, for example, this theory has underpinned the assumption that the best way to manage the public sector is to enable 'consumers' to pursue their interests against those of 'producers'. The latter are taken to be lazy and self-interested and to have a set of interests which are more or less diametrically opposed to those of the rationally

self-interested 'consumers'. Each party is assumed to be primarily interested in minimising its own costs while maximising its gains from any transaction, and the only way in which service users are thought to be capable of any effective agency is by behaving as selective and demanding shoppers in a competitive marketplace. Policy has been designed to empower service users to pressure 'producers' to improve service delivery through market or quasi-market mechanisms, for example by not choosing to send their children to schools which perform badly according to league tables. The consequent transformation of relationships between doctors and patients, teachers and students, parents and children, and so on, into retail transactions is seen as a great gain, revealing the 'true' nature of those relationships, thereby making them transparent and accountable, which otherwise 'producers' would continue to obfuscate with their mystificatory and self-serving ideologies of 'professionalism'. The effect has been to oblige service providers and users increasingly to behave in accordance with these norms, whether they wanted to or not (Leys 2001, Pollock 2005).

For example, in the case of both the health and education services in the United Kingdom, established mechanisms for giving local communities a collective voice were either abolished or systematically eroded through gradual weakening and disbandment of Local Education Authorities and Community Health Councils. This effect was exacerbated in school systems through policies such as the promotion of 'charter schools' in the United States – embraced more enthusiastically by Obama's than by any previous federal administration (Mora and Christianakis 2011) – and 'academies' in the United Kingdom, which have been embraced with intensifying ardour by successive administrations of every political hue: each term designates essentially the same thing, namely a school which is state-funded but independent of established forms of local democratic accountability, intentionally mimicking forms of governance and curriculum provision typical of the private-education sector. This kind of policy effectively leaves service users with little scope to exercise agency within the service other than by accepting their roles as 'consumers', either by exercising simple consumer choice or by using mechanisms such as complaints procedures which automatically position them in the 'consumer' role, and deliberately excludes the wider community or their political representatives from any involvement with the institution in question. At

the same time the evaluation and reward of staff 'performance' within such service sectors has come to be increasingly dependent on the delivery of very narrowly defined quantitative outcomes (treating a certain number of patients in a given time, for example, or achieving a specified result in a school test) which necessarily encourages an instrumental and individualised approach to their work, careers, and relationships with service users. This is a classic example of the performative[14] power of ideology insofar as it informs actual public policy. PCT and its variants do not merely *describe* the relations between public-service participants as, in effect, a war of every man against every man: they *prescribe* them as such, and in the process become self-fulfilling prophecies.

A key mechanism for neoliberalism's project to re-engineer the subjectivities of citizens has been the active production and careful management of inequalities and insecurities – 'precarity' – in labour markets, in order to compel workers to behave in accordance with a particular neoliberal ideal of the self-motivated, entrepreneurial worker who treats themselves and their career as a business of which they are the manager, director and sole shareholder, and treats all other labour-market participants as competitors rather than collaborators (Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos 2008). In 2003, for example, the French summer festival season was disrupted for months by the action of precarious workers in the entertainment industry protesting against the reform of their long-established system of professional unemployment insurance (Lazzarato 2009). Inspired by the 'tough love' shown by Clinton's 'workfare' programmes in the United States, French neoliberal policy makers despised the existing system precisely because it facilitated a redistribution of wealth between poorer and wealthier members of the professional community, effectively collectivising the economic risks inherent in the practice of such precarious professions, instead of devolving it onto individuals who would thereby be compelled to compete more vigorously to make themselves attractive to potential employers, either in their own sector or as casual labour in others. In the United Kingdom since the economic crisis of 2008, a much feared rise in unemployment has been 'averted' by a vast expansion of low-paid, part-time and precarious employment, while the coalition government has actually attempted

(unsuccessfully so far) to introduce a system of effectively forced unpaid labour for welfare recipients.[15]

What we see here are classic, but far from unique, manifestations of neoliberalism's abstract machinic processes, and it is worth reflecting a little further on their internal logic. Historically, neoliberalism's tendency to liberalise the economic and personal spheres while dislocating (Laclau 1990), segmenting and striating (Deleuze and Guattari 1988) the public domain, inhibiting or repressing any manifestation of collective agency or potential, and undermining any effective democratic institutions or aggregations of interests in the process, is consistent throughout its history; this has been true ever since the military coup which installed the first neoliberal government in Chile in 1971 (Harvey 2005).

Arguably, in fact, this double logic has been consistent throughout the history of capitalism. Capitalism's tendency to 'creative destruction' (Schumpeter 1950) and 'deterritorialisation' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983) – its drive to weaken social bonds, disaggregate collectives, individualise societies, disrupt communities, fragment cultures and mobilise populations – has been a subject of commentary throughout its history (for example, Marx and Engels 1967). The effect of these processes, if unchecked, will always be to promote both social atomisation and economic inequality, whilst generating a culture in which the prevalence of what Marx calls 'commodity fetishism' (1972) will tend to make that inequality particularly difficult to bear for the losers, who cannot get access to those prized commodities which confer status and apparent happiness upon their owners. This combination of social atomisation, inequality and lower-class resentment will in turn tend to provoke high levels of anxiety, paranoia and a historically relatively high rate of property crime.[16] Any society faced with such tendencies beyond a certain level of intensity will have to find some way to stabilise or at least to direct and control the rate of social change, either through the invention of new forms of collective self-government or through the imposition of more or less arbitrary governmental controls over large areas of public life.[17] Both the democratic reforms of the modern period and the growth of the state form since the Renaissance responded to the same set of impulses and problems, but neoliberalism's characteristic combination of individualised liberalism and public authoritarianism

arguably manifests their implicit logic with unprecedented clarity. Of course, there are regional variations in the operation of this logic, but the underlying pattern of change – the tendency to combine social and economic liberalisation with a restriction or weakening of democratic capacities and a deterioration of public life – is the same everywhere. This is true from the United States, with its historically low rates of political participation and civic engagement (Putnam 2000) and its monstrous growth in the prison population in recent decades (Jarvis 2004), to post-Communist Russia under Putin's nationalist regime, to China, arguably the exemplar of twenty-first-century anti-democratic liberal capitalism (Harvey 2005). What's more, this is a situation which the international institutions of neoliberal governance – most notably the World Trade Organisation, but also, for example, the International Monetary Fund and the European Union – go out of their way to enforce on vulnerable societies whenever the opportunity arises, from the notorious 'structural adjustment plans' imposed by the IMF on developing economies to the public-sector cuts imposed on Greece after the international financial crisis of 2008.

The conventional Marxist explanation for these interlinked developments is offered by David Harvey in his concise account of the history of neoliberalism (2005): neoliberalism is simply a project to restore and increase the class power of capital, by extending its own reach and by weakening the power of organised labour. This is a powerful analysis which is in no way inaccurate or mistaken, but I would like to revise it here by suggesting that it is not only workers qua workers whose organisational capacity is systematically inhibited by neoliberalism. The mechanisms and processes of individualisation and privatisation ultimately work against the formation of *any* form of potent collectivity whatsoever, whether it is based on class relations or not. Today, the chronic inability of public bodies to solve either of the two great crises facing humanity surely illustrates the inherent weaknesses and ultimate implications of such a programme. Neoliberalism's key mode of hegemonic operation has been to secure consent for intensified rates of exploitation through an unsustainable expansion of consumer credit: the logical conclusion of this project is illustrated by the collapse of economic opportunities for youth in countries such as Spain and Greece proceeding from the global debt crisis of 2008, itself a consequence of the international market in consumer credit's

running completely out of control (Lanchester 2010). Above all, the total lack of progress to date in reducing global carbon emissions is testament to neoliberal post-democracy's inability to solve the most fundamental problems facing life on Planet Earth today. What this analysis makes clear is the desperate need for new ways to imagine, conceptualise and institutionalise democratic forms of collectivity. This is the task which subsequent chapters will undertake.

Before addressing this task, however, an important set of questions remain. We have outlined in this chapter the ways in which the Hobbesian tradition conceptualises both the individual and the social. But how exactly does it understand the relationship *between* them, and is its account of that relationship so wholly complicit with a failed social system as to be of no use to us at all? In the next chapter we will address this question in detail, while suggesting that in fact that tradition, particularly as it has come to inform psychoanalytic theory, has produced some analytical tools which are simply too powerful to be left aside, even while many of its intellectual presuppositions must be rejected.

3

Leviathan Logics: Group Psychology from Hobbes to Laclau

As we have seen, the only type of relationship between humans that competitive individualism considers legitimate is one of legally regulated competition. Of course, market relations are social relations; but the competitive individualist assumption is that a degree of mutually incompatible self-interest on either side inheres in every relationship, and that this aspect of the relationship must be rendered as transparent as possible and regulated through forms of contract. The question which emerges then is: how does any form of social coherence really occur at all in such an imagined scenario, given the inherently competitive and aggressive nature of all social relationships? How can contracts even come into being and be enforced if individuals are so selfishly inclined and so incapable of mutually beneficial behaviour? In short: how can even the minimal degree of social order required for market relations to function be established?

As we saw in the previous chapter, the oldest answer to this question in the liberal tradition comes from Hobbes, for whom the only solution is voluntary submission to an arbitrary authority. However, as mentioned there, much of the subsequent history of liberal theory has involved attempts to move away from Hobbes's authoritarian conclusions as a necessary consequence of his individualism, by arguing for the capacity of individuals to make rational decisions and the consequent viability of various forms of democracy, as well as conceptualising market relations as at least partially co-operative and

egalitarian in nature (Barker 1952). From this perspective, the practice of neoliberal governance has involved an interesting return to the basic Hobbesian model of the social, wherein relations are conceptualised as always necessarily competitive, and it is assumed that only the top-down supervision and management of institutions, workplaces and social situations can produce an efficient and functioning society – even if that practice is not always legitimated in explicitly Hobbesian terms.[1] Of course, the techniques and technologies of neoliberal management are far subtler and more sophisticated than anything envisaged by Hobbes; but the extent to which they tend to be experienced by those subjected to them as arbitrary impositions is well documented, and significant (Clarke and Newman 1997, Fisher 2009). However, it is not my purpose here to argue that Hobbes's political theory can be simply mapped onto the practice of neoliberalism. Of course any detailed investigation of the two would reveal significant differences. Rather, my point is that neoliberalism in practice seems to manifest, in important ways, the abstract logic of Hobbes's model of political society, which describes what Deleuze and Guattari would have called a 'diagram' of neoliberal culture (Guattari 1989, Deleuze 2006).

A very important issue for any political or social theory is the question of how the relations between the individuals making up a society, or in fact any given group or collectivity, are conceptualised. Pre-modern political theory, for example, tended to understand societies as organisms, whose interdependent parts were organised in a natural systemic hierarchy, like the parts of a body (Harvey 2007).[2] Hobbes famously inherits the image of civil society as a human body, but radically reworks it. Instead of being composed of a system of variegated and complementary organs, he imagines a single giant individual – the Leviathan – composed of an aggregation of separate, formally identical but otherwise unrelated individuals. This image illustrates Hobbes's claim that what binds together the members of society is nothing but the fact of their individual submission to the sovereign authority: there are no lateral bonds of fellowship or common purpose, only a collection of parallel, but never intersecting, 'vertical' bonds linking each individual to a central or superior locus. This is a crucial point for the argument of this book, because it is this image – that of the *socius* which coheres only on the basis of the vertical relations between individuals and a central institution, leader or idea

– which I will argue persists in many areas of political and cultural thought, but which ultimately poses serious problems for any attempt to imagine a substantial and dynamic form of democracy. At the same time, Hobbes's image also illustrates perfectly another key dimension of this way of conceptualising the collective: the fact that it can only understand it as a sort of meta-individual, united by and bound to a single purpose and characterised by an ontological homogeneity.

As an abstract diagram of social relations, this model persists in a number of areas. Of particular interest is the way in which it seems to inform the theories of group behaviour which were consolidated in the late nineteenth century and which remain influential to this day. In particular, Gustave Le Bon's social psychology reproduces an essentially Hobbesian set of assumptions about the nature of the social. Le Bon's thought has been enormously influential on figures as diverse as Freud, Hitler, Mussolini, Ernesto Laclau and Anne Coulter (McClelland 1988, Laclau 2005, Coulter 2011, Menschel 2002), and represents perhaps the clearest and most explicit expression of a set of ideas which far predate Hobbes and the liberal tradition, dating back at least to Plato (McClelland 1988), according to which groups are constitutively incapable of rational behaviour, easily suggestible and dependent for any coherence of purpose on the authority of a charismatic leader. Writing at a time when the international labour movement was reaching an unprecedented size and degree of organisation, and when the possible extension of voting rights to all adult citizens made the achievement of basic political democracy a real possibility in many countries for the first time, Le Bon was a committed defender of the liberal model of civilisation, based on the values of private property and individual freedom, as long as these privileges were fully extended only to the elite who alone were capable of exercising them correctly (Le Bon 1899). Le Bon's psychology was perhaps the clearest and most theoretically developed expression of the worst fears of those elites at that time: fears that democracy would inevitably give rise to collectivist and populist forms of politics which would see the elite's privileges stripped from them by demagogues and the hordes which followed them. Where the socialist and communist movements, drawing inspiration from the experience of discipline and organisation in the Labour movement – placed faith in the capacity of humans en masse to create rational systems of collective decision making, many among the

liberal elite expressed the kind of fears which Le Bon's theory justified (McClelland 1988). According to this theory, rationality is only really a property of individuals, and any congregation of individuals will serve only to weaken the rationality of each of its constituent members, who will find themselves easily swayed either by random suggestions or by charismatic leadership. There was already an established literature on the tendency of 'popular delusions' (Mackay 1995) to manifest themselves in various historical contexts – from the seventeenth-century witch craze to the stock-market bubbles of the modern era – but Le Bon's theory implied that such behaviours were not exceptional, or even periodic, but actually typical of collective behaviour *as such*.

This is an assumption which has persisted for centuries, and has almost always been invoked as an argument against the possibility of any effective democracy. As McClelland notes, the entire tradition of Western political philosophy begins with Plato's critique of Athenian 'democracy'[3] as effective mob rule, and McClelland rightly identifies Hobbes as a key figure both in inheriting Plato's assumptions and in developing some of their implications. Plato's conclusion is that the ideal city would be ruled by philosopher–kings whose authority would be legitimated by their philosophical knowledge of 'the good' – quite a different perspective to that informing the various forms of social-contract theory which characterise liberal political philosophy after Hobbes. As McClelland shows, however, what they ultimately share is a grave suspicion of collectivity in general, in particular the actual physicality of the crowd.

The father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, based his social psychology of the 1920s on Le Bon (Freud 1922), and presents a theory of group psychodynamics which has been highly influential on fields ranging from public relations to post-structuralist political theory (Bernays 1928, Laclau 2005). For Freud, what defines the coherence of every group is the individual relationship of each member of the group with a single common point of cathexis (emotional investment): classically, an actual leader, but potentially a more abstract symbol or idea. Freud's theories about the structure of the personality and the relationship between the conscious and unconscious mind developed and changed throughout his career, but this account emerged at the moment when his best known model of the human psyche was just on the point of development. This was the model which distinguished

between the *id* (literally the 'it') or unconscious mind, the *ego* (literally the 'I') and the *super-ego* (literally the 'super-I') (Freud 1927). For Freud, the personality was composed of these three entities: the id, which is the domain of unconscious desires and of the 'primary process', within which ideas relate to each other according to a logic which is not that of ordinary rationality;[4] the ego, which is the domain of conscious intention, desire, planning, and rational pleasure-seeking; the super-ego, which is essentially the conscience, the repository of all of the ideas about what constitutes good and bad behaviour, objectives or feelings which the subject has accumulated from their parents or the wider culture (and which tends to be experienced as a harassing force, constantly punishing the individual for failing to live up to its ideals). Importantly, the super-ego is the site of operation of the subject's 'ego ideal',[5] the ideal to which the subject aspires, and 'identification' with which is a defining feature of the subject's personality. 'Identification' is the key process by which, for the mature Freud, subjectivity comes into being (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973), and involves a perceived resemblance or possible resemblance between subject and object, leading to a kind of imaginary assimilation of the object into the subject's own personality, in particular in the form of an 'ego ideal'. When we accept an ego ideal, we take an idealised version of the object as a standard against which to measure our ongoing success as a person. For Freud, the group is defined by the fact of each individual's identifying with a symbolic leader, taking this central figure as their ego ideal. The identification which occurs between group members is wholly dependent upon this, and is never conceived by Freud as a potentially primary social phenomenon.

A careful reading of Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* suggests that the issue of how far to recognise the possibility of *mutual* processes of identification, bonding, subjectivity shaping, and so on, is a difficult one which is simply never resolved. Freud repeatedly raises the possibility, while ultimately seeming to refute it, insisting that any mutual identification between group members is only possible on the basis of their personal, individual relationship with a common object (1922: 49, 53). The extent to which this model shares the logic of Hobbes's Leviathan should be obvious. In fact, much like Hobbes, Freud's discussions of social life always seem to start from the assumption that relations between individuals naturally tend towards

spontaneous hostility (1930). Although Freud also acknowledges a powerful libidinal dimension to the bonds which form *between* group members, it is clearly significant that he always describes such bonds as depending upon the prior psychic investment which each individual makes in a key central figure. For Freud, for example, the feeling between siblings is always dependent upon the prior relationship of each sibling with the parents. Juliet Mitchell argues persuasively that the underemphasis on sibling relationships in classical psychoanalytic theory is precisely continuous with the exclusive emphasis of that body of theory on vertical relationships at the expense of 'lateral' ones (2003: 1–31).

Freud's famous fable of the 'primal horde' is a telling example here: Freud speculates that human culture more or less begins at the moment when the brothers of a prehistoric clan band together to kill their 'Alpha male' father and distribute his mates and his authority amongst themselves. Freud never posits any authentic fraternal feeling between the brothers themselves, assuming that their mutual identification is entirely dependent upon their individual psychic investment in the father (1938). This is a particularly resonant example, because it effectively rules out the possibility of any original sense of fraternity: and 'fraternity' is precisely what radicals have celebrated as an alternative to bourgeois individualism, at least since the French revolution (Derrida 1997). Having said this, it is important to note that Freud arguably shares with that tradition a certain masculinist bias precisely in their common fixation on 'fraternity' as the model of sociality. In fact this is the point at which the androcentric and patriarchal implications of the Hobbesian–Freudian model of sociality become fully apparent (cf. Brown 1995: 135–65). Freud's examples of typical social institutions are those historic bastions of male privilege, the army and the church, and there is no question that real or symbolic fatherhood and socio-political authority are more or less indistinguishable for him, as for Hobbes and for almost all representatives of the Western tradition. As Derrida has shown and as Freud's model exemplifies, this tradition has also always understood egalitarian collectivity in terms of a logic of consanguine *fraternity*, which is a clearly masculinist mode of conception. Women simply have no place in any of these models of the social, except, implicitly as passive objects of exchange (Mitchell 1974: 370–6). Of course, there is always a feminist defence that can be made

of Freud at least, which is that he merely describes the psycho-social consequences of patriarchy without ever actually endorsing it. This is a justifiable claim up to a point, but that point is precisely his failure to discuss possible mechanisms of sociality and socialisation which do not depend upon what I will call 'Leviathan logic'.

Feminist theory can shed considerable light on what is at stake in the deployment of this logic. Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous (Sellers 1994) showed some years ago that the Western philosophical tradition, including much Freudian theory, is 'phallomorphic' in character, shaped by patterns of thought which privilege linear processes over cyclical, lateral or complex ones, emphasising the feminine as messy and incomplete when compared to the magisterial unity of the masculine (Irigaray 1985a, 1985b).[6] The vertical logic of the Leviathan is a typical expression of these prejudices, and it is no accident, as will be discussed later, that the women's movement has been one of the most important innovators in trying to break with its organisational implications. At the same time, the attempt to break with that logic, to imagine forms of sociality which operate on the basis of complex or lateral relations, has often allied itself to an attempt to imagine sexuality in terms of some far more complex morphology, such as Deleuze and Guattari's advocacy of the pursuit of a sexuality beyond all binaries: neither femininity, masculinity, homosexuality or hetero-sexuality, but '*n* sexes' (1988: 275–8). As Derrida (1997) shows, the failure to think in such terms, the insistent reproduction of fraternal and paternal models of sociality and companionship, has been one of the major brakes on the development of radical democratic thought since ancient times.

It is no wonder then that Freud, like most adherents of Le Bon's theory, seems to have been sceptical as to the long-term viability of socialism or even of political democracy (1930), although he himself had many admirers amongst political radicals. It is not until much more recently that pro-democratic thinkers have tried to draw on Freud without making significant revisions to his psycho-social models. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, writing both together and separately, are arguably the leading Anglophone theorists of 'radical democracy' in recent decades, and both have drawn heavily on psychoanalytic thought and on the thought of writers such as Le Bon and Carl Schmidt who are more normally thought of as influences on,

or partisans of, conservative and fascist thought (Mouffe 1999, Laclau 2005: 21–30). Because their interest in such thinkers can sometimes make them an easy target for critics on the Left, it is worth reflecting on the reasons for which these radical 'post-Marxist' theorists might turn to such sources: reasons which are arguably historical and factual as much as conceptual and theoretical. For the simple fact is that the political history of the early twentieth century offers very little evidence with which to refute the claims made by the theorists of crowd psychology. The single most notable phenomenon to emerge in the new mass democracies of Europe after the First World War was indeed a form of radical collectivism; but not the rational, cosmopolitan, potentially libertarian communism of Marx's vision – rather it was that demagogic, authoritarian, populist form of nationalism which took its general name from its pioneering Italian variant: fascism. Even in the Soviet Union, the great enemy of the fascist regimes, 'communism' evolved into a political form which bore all of the hallmarks of a collectivism as imagined by Le Bon or Freud: centralised power, a personality cult of the leader and nationalist rhetoric, engendering fear and paranoia amongst ordinary members of the public, were the hallmarks of Stalinism in the 1930s. Arguably this turn of events still presents the single greatest challenge to radical political theory, marking as it does the historical point at which progressive hopes for the positive implications of democracy and advanced industrialisation were most comprehensively disappointed. This is not to say that the necessity of explaining fascism has ever been the driving factor of Laclau and Mouffe's thought:[7] only that this necessity makes it impossible for us to dismiss Le Bon and especially Freud as reactionaries, and obliges us to take seriously their ideas, as Laclau and Mouffe have done.

So what is Laclau and Mouffe's theory? There is no space here for a full exposition of their complex and subtle arguments, but I shall try to draw out some of their key ideas. Firstly, they both start from the presumption that 'society' has a purely negative mode of existence. That is to say, in positive terms, there is no such thing as 'society' or the social in and of itself: there is rather only a complex set of relations governed by the logic of 'antagonism'. 'Antagonism' is a very complex term as used by Laclau and Mouffe, which does not necessarily designate relations of competition or hostility between individuals (although it may manifest itself as such). It rather refers to

the general impossibility that any social identity – be it an individual identity or a group identity – can achieve a state of perfect 'fullness' or completion, and the fact that the possibility of achieving such fullness will always be experienced as 'blocked' by external entities. This is a theory which Laclau in particular derives from a framework inspired by ideas of the great French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan (2006). For Lacan, the experience of human subjectivity is always by definition an experience of 'lack' – of the self as internally divided (an extension of Freud's emphasis on the internal division into id, ego and super-ego) and incapable of achieving full satisfaction. For Lacan, this lack is what makes desire – the basic motive force of human agency, sexuality and creativity – possible (Fink 1995: 49–68). Just as Freud uses his model of the individual psyche as a model for the collective personality of the group (with the leader in the role of super-ego, or 'ego ideal'), Laclau partly bases his model of collectivity-formation on Lacan's model of the subject, emphasising in both cases the impossibility of either attaining the supposedly desired state of absolute completion and self-identity. The socio-political implications of this are that groups will tend to define themselves not only, as Freud explains, in terms of their common adoption of an ego ideal, but also in terms of their common understanding of what it is that antagonises them and compromises their ideal identities, identifying a shared 'constitutive outside' upon which depends the consistency of their own shared identity. The classic historic example of such a collective formation is of course Nazism, with its strong identification with Hitler as the ego ideal of all good Germans and its designation of the Jews (as well as Bolsheviks, Roma and homosexuals) as antagonists and the 'constitutive outside' of German identity. This is a clear example, but an extreme one, and Laclau emphasises the extent to which every group formation apparently depends on some similar logic. For example, when trying to define New Labour as the embodiment of British modernity, Tony Blair famously characterised all of his opponents on both Left and Right as 'forces of conservatism' (Finlayson 2003: 80) – a term which was virtually meaningless insofar as it actually referred to a vast range of disparate and wholly incompatible political positions. This amounted to a typical effort to posit a 'constitutive outside' for New Labour. In this case, 'modernity' took on the status of what Laclau (1996) has called a 'tendentially empty signifier', a signifier which

increasingly seems to designate *nothing but* the general coherence of the collective or project as such.

Laclau and Mouffe have both in different ways developed some of the implications of such a model of the social for democratic thought and practice. Mouffe in particular has explored models of both 'radical' and 'agonistic' democracy deriving in part from it. The basic argument which informs these models, heavily simplified, is as follows. Every social formation, or at least every political order, depends upon the relationship of each constituent individual to a central figure, term, or idea that defines the coherence of the group (as well as on the designation of 'constitutive outsides'). What differentiates democracy from other types of social formation or political order is the fact that it institutionalises the idea of this central locus of sovereignty as being inherently empty, open or contested (Mouffe 2000). This is a powerful argument, which follows logically and elegantly from, amongst other sources, Freud's social psychology, and offers a democratic response to the undemocratic conclusions which are normally drawn from it. From this perspective, the problem with both fascism and all forms of authoritarian collectivism is not that they rely on a more or less arbitrary investment in a central figure or idea, but that they insist on determining the nature of this central term as unchanging, unchangeable and permanent. Accepting the nature of the social as defined by Freud and his tradition, this argument suggests that the mature response to realising the accuracy of Freud's account is to accept that, yes, structurally speaking, there will always be a 'Master' in place (Salecl 1994: 140–1), but that it is possible, by virtue of our explicit acknowledgement of the arbitrary necessity of the 'Master', to institutionalise his very contingency and arbitrariness. This, in effect, is what representative democracy already does when it functions well and lives up to its pluralist promise. By putting a contested space (parliament, for example) at the heart of our public life, by institutionalising forms of public debate and contestation (elections) as key mechanisms of decision making, pluralist democracy acknowledges and makes visible the contingent and changeable nature of that content which fulfils the role of the master/leader /ideal.

Ultimately, this amounts to a strong argument for democracy as a pluralist form of politics. Contrary to the views of some critics (Casarino and Negri 2008: 163, for example), it arguably does furnish

us with an effective position from which to criticise neoliberalism, to the extent that neoliberalism itself strives to install a singular ideology and system of government as 'sovereign' and to eliminate all competition to it. It's not entirely clear that this is a particularly strong argument against neoliberalism specifically, given that other elements of Laclau and Mouffe's shared oeuvre would tend to the conclusion that any political project whatsoever will, by definition, make such an attempt to 'hegemonise' the political space, and that even radical democracy, if it could be instantiated as a political project, would be working to exclude its constitutive others (all anti-pluralist, anti-democratic, 'totalitarian' ideologies); so it is unclear that there is any particular objection to be made to neoliberalism for attempting to do much the same thing on its own terms. Nonetheless, historically this has been the basis for Mouffe's key argument against those former parties of the Left in particular who have adopted neoliberalism as an unquestioned dogma (Mouffe 2000: 108–23); and it remains a powerful and consistent argument since she has also argued strongly and persuasively for the dangers of a world in which any singular ideology is entirely dominant.

However, what this model of politics and society does not do is to challenge basic Hobbesian presuppositions in any meaningful way. In fact, Mouffe herself states that

> [i]n a sense, my project is to derive non-Hobbesian consequences from Hobbesian premises. Hobbes was right when he said that the natural condition of mankind is war. I would reformulate this differently because I think politics is about the collective subject. Hobbes was an individualist and he thought of individuals in war against each other. (1996: 146)

Mouffe's distinction between Hobbes and herself is very interesting here, but I would want to point out one problem with it. Of course, Hobbes is an individualist, as we have seen; but his theory is also a theory of the collective subject, for that is exactly what the Leviathan is. The point is surely not that Hobbes lacks a theory of the collective subject, but that his theory of the collective subject can imagine it as nothing other than an aggregation of individuals which behaves

just like one great meta-individual, lacking any *specific* qualities as a *collective* subject.

As such, it's not entirely clear that either Mouffe or Laclau have a very different model of the collective subject to that of Hobbes. As we have seen, their approaches are largely derived from the Lacanian derivation of Freud's social psychology; and Laclau himself points out the extent to which Freud's model is based on the assumption that the collective subject operates according to exactly the same logic as the individual subject (Laclau 2005: 58). Laclau makes this observation when he is charting the ways in which the social psychologies of Le Bon and then of Freud gradually differentiated themselves from their predecessor in the thought of Tain (Laclau 2005), which distinguished between an entirely chaotic and disorganised 'crowd' and a rational individual. But what if the end point of this logical process were to be not merely the recognition that collective subjects might behave just like individual subjects, but rather the observation that collective subjects operate according to logics which are, on their own terms, rational and potent, but which are different from those which organise the behaviour of individuals?

This is a question which we will touch on again in the next chapter. For now, I would like merely to observe that it is not clear that Laclau or Mouffe depart in any fundamental way from the basic Hobbesian template. Certainly they bring to it an unprecedented level of sophistication, drawing in particular on the advances in personal and social psychology made by Freud and Lacan. Nonetheless, with them we remain ultimately in a social world governed by the logic of the Leviathan: the collective subject composed of atomised individuals who relate to each other only by virtue of their vertical relation to the locus of sovereignty. This observation is by no means a criticism of Laclau or Mouffe, because, as we have already seen, there is no question that many, probably most, actually existing collectivities do seem to operate according to this logic. Rather, it highlights the extent to which their work represents the highest point of development so far of a particular tradition of modern political thought which begins with Hobbes's rejection of any natural, organic or divinely ordained understanding of what it is that founds social order and makes it possible. In developing a theory of democratic possibility in line with that tradition's presuppositions, Mouffe has made arguably the most

convincing attempt to date to 'derive non-Hobbesian consequences from Hobbesian premises' (which, as I have already argued, can be seen as being the core project of the entire liberal tradition). Laclau's analysis of the logics of social organisation, particularly forms of populist politics, arguably constitutes the most developed manifestation of the social-psychology tradition, without which it remains impossible to answer the question, 'Why fascism?', as well as to understand the necessary populist element of any project which seeks to challenge an existing hegemonic settlement or power.

Thus it will be useful here to explore Laclau's model a little further. This model has been developed over many years, drawing on sources in Marxist political theory and post-structuralism as well as psychoanalysis, and though it will obviously not be possible to do it full justice here, we can further elucidate some of its key points.[8] Laclau's most recent work, which in some sense marks the most developed form of that theory, is primarily focussed on the analysis of 'populism' – also the focus of Laclau's first book (1977) – as a general political logic. It must be stressed here, that contrary to some casual readings, Laclau is neither for nor against populism, but rather works to understand its logic as objectively as possible (itself a significant gesture, given the history of anti-populist condemnation which we have already discussed). In fact, what Laclau offers is a general typology of socio-political logics, with specific reference to their characteristic psycho-social dynamics, organised around the distinction between the 'populist' and the 'institutionalist' dimensions of political organisation.[9] 'Populism' as described by Laclau is that form of social organisation which most clearly resembles the description of group psychology offered by Freud and Le Bon. It is characterised by a number of key features. Firstly, it is characterised by the division of imaginary social space into two distinct camps, through the production of a 'dichotomic frontier' between 'the people' and their constitutive outside. Secondly, it is characterised by the creation of a relation of 'equivalence' between an otherwise disparate set of political demands (demands for shorter working hours, higher wages, welfare services or education, for example) which unites 'the people'. Thirdly, it is characterised by the partial unification of those demands around a 'hegemonic' element which comes to stand for the whole (classically, for example, within the socialist labour movement, industrial workers' struggle for higher

wages and social reforms became the key reference point around which a number of other demands were co-ordinated), and which can only do so effectively to the extent that it is progressively emptied of actual distinctive content. Fourthly, it is characterised by the psychic investment of all 'the people' in the hegemonic object, term, or leader.

Laclau distinguishes such 'populist' formations from 'institutionalist' ones on each of these points. 'Institutionalist' projects tend to deny the existence of irreconcilable social differences or antagonisms, orienting themselves towards the mere 'administration' of society. At the same time they generally allow for, and even encourage, a greater degree of differentiation within the overall social whole. They normally do not require as great a psychic investment in a hegemonic object as do populist formations, and tend also to minimise the gap between the ordinary group member and the object of identification. In a recent interview, Laclau explains the difference as follows:

> The distinction whose pertinence, however, remains, is that between cases in which the cathectic investment in the hegemonic object is so overwhelming that a whole symbolic order becomes totally dependent on that object, and cases in which the symbolic order is more immanent and self-sustained and, consequently, the cathectic investment in the hegemonic object is weaker. In Group Psychology Freud analyzed this question in terms of the differential distances between the ego and the ego ideal (Freud, 1991). The problem, in terms of political analysis is, obviously, to determine the degrees of either institutionalism or populism characteristic of a given hegemonic formation. (Glynos and Stavrakakis 2010: 237–8)

Before addressing some of the issues that it raises, it is important to stress the value of Laclau's framework here. Consider, for example, how we might use the distinction between populism and institutionalism in order to analyse historical forms of neoliberalism. In the United Kingdom and the United States, neoliberalism was initially only capable of achieving success as a populist project. The classic instance here is Thatcher's authoritarian populism, which fitted Laclau's description very clearly. Identifying, either explicitly or by association, a set of threats to British greatness, which included amongst others trade unionists, feminists, immigrants, urban black

youth, participants in 'alternative' culture, and gay and lesbian activists, the New Right constructed a 'chain of equivalence' (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) which linked demands for the restoration of 'traditional' social values with the demand of finance capital for greater freedom and with a generalised set of demands for personal autonomy (Gamble 1988, Hall 1988). It was very clear who was on which side of the 'dichotomic frontier'. In the 1990s, however, once its great populist putsch had succeeded, and its great geopolitical threat, the Soviet bloc, had been eliminated, neoliberalism no longer found it useful to operate in such a mode. Instead the tendency of 'Third Way' neoliberals, such as Clinton, Schroeder and Blair, was to present themselves as pursuing a politics without enemies (as Mouffe herself memorably complained), simply administering society according to wholly pragmatic principles of efficiency, even claiming to have superseded 'politics' altogether (Mulgan 1997, Giddens 1998, Etzioni 2000, Mouffe 2000). Bill Clinton's advisory team became famous for their strategy of 'triangulation', eschewing any coherent ideology in favour of taking deliberately centrist positions on all issues. Although in practice the politics of the Third Way had been closely prefigured when the Australian government of Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke adopted neoliberal policies in the 1980s, it was only in the post-Cold War era that its advocates developed a discernible theory of postmodern technocratic government. Thus began the present era of neoliberal 'managerialism' and technocracy (Clarke and Newman 1997) – what I and others have called 'post-democracy'.

One could even see the institutionalist tendency to internal differentiation of the group as manifest in New Labour's commitment to a meritocratic politics of regulated inequality, which Lazzarato (2009) identifies as also having been a key mechanism of neoliberal social policy in France, as opposed to Thatcher's more simplistic appeals to a general ethic of entrepreneurship and individual self-improvement. This distinction can also be registered in the different approaches to the core neoliberal programme of privatising public services adopted by the New Right and Third Way administrations respectively. Whereas the former pursued large-scale, well-publicised public share issues of previously nationalised utility companies, the latter preferred the quiet, piecemeal privatisation of sections of services, often according to highly complex mechanisms which received little press attention (Pollock

2005). Of course, when confronted with stubborn resistance which threatened to politicise and differentiate the neoliberal programme from its potential antagonists, Third Way leaders were forced to make populist gestures – such as Blair's attacks on public-sector workers – but these were invariably short-lived and narrow in scope. The Third Way could therefore be characterised as a largely 'institutionalist' form of neoliberalism, as distinct from the neoliberal populism of the New Right. We might even infer from this example that populist tendencies are more likely to typify 'emergent' forces (Williams 1977) which are in the process of challenging for a hegemonic position, while existing hegemonic blocs are almost by definition more likely to pursue an 'institutionalist' strategy which occludes the very possibility of any challenge to their legitimacy. We can see then, the great utility of this conceptual distinction.

So let us return now to Laclau's grounding of this distinction, and his description of the psycho-social dynamics of institutionalism, in Freud's social psychology. In the concluding, penultimate section of *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, in which Freud is beginning to elaborate the relationship between the ego and the ego ideal which will lead him to posit the super-ego as a conceptually distinct element of the psyche, Freud mentions that the examples of group psychology which he, following Le Bon, has examined, are extreme ones, wherein the substitution of the ego ideal for each individual's ego is seemingly almost complete. Freud contrasts this to the situation which is more typical of modern culture:

> Each individual is a component part of numerous groups, he is bound by ties of identification in many directions, and he has built up his ego ideal upon the most various models. Each individual therefore has a share in numerous group minds – those of his race, of his class, of his creed, of his nationality, etc. – and he can also raise himself above them to the extent of having a scrap of independence and originality. Such stable and lasting group formations, with their uniform and constant effects, are less striking to an observer than the rapidly formed and transient groups from which Le Bon has made his brilliant psychological sketch of the group mind. (Freud 1922: 101)

Despite having raised two very significant issues here, Freud does not actually discuss at all, anywhere else in the essay, either the implications for our understanding of subject formation of the individual belonging to multiple overlapping groups, or the different psycho-social dynamics that might operate in 'stable and lasting group formations'; instead he simply returns to a study of the mechanics operating in crowds, as described by Le Bon. Nonetheless, Laclau reads the section of the essay opened by this passage, as well as others, as expressing the view that according to Freud there are two different social logics according to which groups may function: on the one hand, that logic by which individuals are bound to the group only by virtue of their identification with the leader; on the other, that logic according to which 'the symbolic order is more immanent and self-sustained'.

Now, this is a fascinating proposition, which raises a question: what exactly does a group look like, when it is grounded in a symbolic order that is relatively immanent and self-sustained? And what are we to make of the overlapping nature of groups and our identifications with them as described in this passage from Freud? Does the latter not suggest that we require a model of sociality which can take account of its dynamism and complexity, and above all its inherent multiplicity? These questions clearly raise the possibility of conceptualising more or less 'leaderless' groups as at least an important political possibility, and of conceptualising a constitutive complexity as characteristic of contemporary sociality, and perhaps all actual lived sociality, apart from extreme, unusually psycho-socially simple, situations. My contention is that although they leave open the possibility for such a conceptualisation of leaderless and inherently complex, multiple groups, neither Freud nor Laclau pursue it in any detail; which leaves us with some work to do.

The specificity of the direction in which Freud and Laclau seem to point us, but do not themselves go, becomes clear when Laclau discusses this logic of 'immanent and self-sustained' collectivity in *On Populist Reason*. Crucially Laclau equates this latter logic directly with a situation in which the group 'acquires the secondary characteristics of an individual' (Laclau 2005: 58). In part, Laclau makes this case in order to differentiate Freud from those of his predecessors who made a clear distinction between the rational individual and the irrational group, and in this he is entirely successful. However, these are not the

only figures against whom Laclau wants to defend the value of Freud's model with exactly the same gesture. In the key section of *On Populist Reason* which discusses *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Laclau particularly takes issue with the reading of Freud's essay offered by the French philosopher Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen (1992). As Laclau correctly summarises it, Borch-Jacobsen's problem with Freud is that he insists that all social relations within the group are dependent upon the relation to the leader, a view which Borch-Jacobsen believes to tend towards seeing collectivity as inherently governed by a single authoritarian logic. Laclau's response to Borch-Jacobsen is to show that Freud only regards that logic as one dimension of the overall process of group formation, the other being the capacity of the group to take on the rational qualities of the individual.

The trouble is that this really doesn't answer Borch-Jacobsen's objections at all. Borch-Jacobsen is not particularly interested in whether or not groups are capable of acting like individuals. Rather, he is concerned with Freud's quite relentless refusal to allow the possibility that there might be forms of *lateral*, *horizontal, mutual* identification and bonding between group members which might be independent of, or prior to, their psychic investment in the leader. Laclau insists that Borch-Jacobsen's reading is 'excessive' (Laclau 2005: 57), but he does not actually offer a single example of Freud allowing for such a possibility. Rather, he defends Freud from Borch-Jacobsen's criticisms by pointing out the mixed nature of the social logics which Freud actually describes, and the fact that Freud is able to allow for the possibility of the group acquiring the characteristics of the individual. Now, there is nothing inaccurate in these remarks of Laclau's about Freud. However, they leave Borch-Jacobsen's core argument simply untouched. Borch-Jacobsen is not merely accusing Freud of authoritarianism, which is the charge from which Laclau successfully defends him. Rather, Borch-Jacobsen is accusing Freud of a profound philosophical *individualism*, simply because he never actually describes a situation in which a lateral identification is not dependent upon a vertical one. It is this charge from which I think Freud cannot be defended. Furthermore, I suggest, the fact that Freud conceptualises the group as potentially rational by attributing to it the properties of the individual in no way absolves him of this charge: indeed, this merely compounds the case for his irreducible conceptual

individualism, once we understand this as a classically *meta-individualist* gesture, assuming as it does that the only mode of rational agency is that typified by the individual subject.

Given the terms of reference which I have established in this chapter, the reader will not be surprised by my next move. It seems to me that there is a very striking resonance between Laclau's insistence on the concept of the group-which-becomes-an-individual as the basic figure of collective rationality in Freud, and Hobbes's image of the Leviathan, society-as-meta-individual. Although Laclau himself argues that the Freudian model of the social which he endorses understands the organisation of the group into a 'collective individual', and its constitution through individual investment in the leader, to be parts of a single complex process (Laclau 2005: 52–64), the crucial point here is that psychic investment in the leader always seems to be assumed to initiate and to take precedence over other dimensions of that process. We are therefore left with a model that, although infinitely more subtle and developed than that of Hobbes, ultimately understands the formation of the collective in much the same terms. And we are left with a criticism that has not been adequately answered: that Freud's model is as irreducibly individualist as Macpherson finds Hobbes's model to be, because ultimately it is a model of agency and rationality which explicitly attributes these qualities only to 'the individual', and one in which the group fundamentally consists of a set of disaggregated individuals whose mutual identification is merely a function of their prior identification with the leader. Finally, this model of group formation carries with it the further problem that it would seem to make it very difficult to imagine any group organising its affairs in a manner which would be consistent with the calls for a 'radical *plural* democracy' with which Laclau has historically been associated. Evidently a radical pluralism demands understanding the group in terms *not* simply of its individuality, but of its own inherent plurality, which is to say its multiple, non-unitary nature: and clearly this raises an inherent problem with the claim that the rationality of the group must be modelled on that of the individual; or rather, in problematising the very idea of 'the individual', it automatically problematises the idea that that concept can serve as the standard for non-pathological collectivity. And is this not already implicit in Freud's

own observation that actually existing sociality is characterised by its complex multiplicity?

It is crucial to emphasise that the foregoing should not be read as a criticism or refutation of the ideas of Laclau and Freud. The historical and demonstrable accuracy of their descriptions of the psycho-social dynamics of groups and their political implications, when applied to many different types of group formation, is not in doubt. We still cannot explain populism and fascism without them, and can explain nothing of social and political life without explaining populism and fascism. Our ultimate conclusion in relation to their ideas should be simply to observe that they have not dwelt on the question of what relatively leaderless and inherently multiple groups might look like, even though they themselves have demonstrated the possibility – even, perhaps, the political necessity – of understanding such groups as operating according to distinct logics. The question which this leaves open is: what models of group formation might there be which would be applicable in such cases? In the subsequent chapters, we shall find out.

4

The State of Community Opened: Multitude and Multiplicity

> In the beginning of Time, the great Creator Reason, made the Earth to be a Common Treasury, to preserve Beasts, Birds, Fishes, and Man, the lord that was to govern this Creation; for Man had Domination given to him, over the Beasts, Birds, and Fishes; but not one word was spoken in the beginning, That one branch of mankind should rule over another. (Winstanley 1649)

Beyond Meta-Individualism?

The last chapter explored the persistence of what I called 'Leviathan logic' in the tradition of modern political thought, as well as in the practice of neoliberalism and its animating ideology of competitive individualism. There are four key features to this persistent logic as I understand it. One is its ontological individualism: that is, its insistence on the irreducible reality of the individual as the basic unit of human experience. The second is its purely negative understanding of the social: the social, the collective or the group are not understood as having any substantial mode of existence, but instead are thought to exist purely by means of a negation and delimitation of the free activity of individuals (even if this negation is itself inevitable, and indeed constitutive of their identity). The third is what we might call its 'verticalism': its insistence that because of the ontological priority of the individual and the purely negative reality of the social, the collective can only function as such by virtue of the

singular relationship of each individual group member to the actual or metaphorical leader. The fourth is what I call its meta-individualism: that is, its belief that the 'collective subject' constituted by these vertical relations can, at best, only act in a meaningful or purposeful way if its agency, rationale and intentionality are understood to be formally identical to those which define the individual subject.

In fact, meta-individualism is a feature which this current of thought shares with many others, including traditional communism (with its insistence on the ideological homogeneity of the party), fascism and indeed most forms of nationalism (with their insistence on the political unity and cultural homogeneity of the people); and we shall explore this theme in more detail shortly. For the moment, I would like to suggest that this is also, in an important way, a key feature of liberal and competitive individualist thought, insofar as liberal individualism normally tends to imagine itself opposed to a totalitarian collectivism, which would smother the individuality of individuals by incorporating them into a homogeneous and unitary mass. Indeed, we might reflect here that the tradition of denigratory descriptions of collectives – crowds, mobs, masses, etc. – always includes a reference to the group's supposed homogeneity in at least one dimension, whether this is the purposive homogeneity of the implacable mob or the passive homogeneity of the industrial 'masses' (Williams 1976: 192). The logic is not hard to comprehend when we see it like this: the individualist tradition mistrusts all collectivities, and it cannot actually imagine the collective as anything other than a state of absolute disorder or of meta-individuality. Therefore, individualism can only allow for the possibility of any kind of rational or positive behaviour by groups if they are conceptualised as meta-individuals. However, individualism must, by virtue of its inherent mistrust and fear of the collective as such, regard the meta-individual as a permanent and even more dangerous threat to the individuality of the actual individual than would be a pure state of disorder (a 'state of nature').

This is very abstract, so let's consider for a moment some casual and quite different examples of the individualist devalorisation of collectivity-as-homogenisation. One good example would be Tony Blair's notorious denigration of the comprehensive and universalist ideal of post-war public-service delivery as offering a 'one size fits all' service,[1] a phrase which has been repeatedly used by advocates of neoliberal

public-service reform. This is a clever rhetorical device because it at once implicitly equates all public services with retail offerings, and expresses the presumed superiority of contemporary, niche-marketed, post-Fordist modes of both service delivery and ordinary retail to their Fordist antecedents. What this set of binary oppositions occludes is precisely the idea that certain models of collective provision might be preferable to individualised and consumerist models when judged in terms which do not presume the retail transaction to be the preferred model for all social interactions; indeed, it occludes the very possibility of understanding such interactions in other terms, and so egalitarian and universalist provision can only be understood as an oppressive, failed form of retail transaction. This does not itself prove that the neoliberal argument against various forms of collectivism is wrong or right; but it does demonstrate that that argument is sustained, not by engaging with arguments for collectivism on their own terms, but by entirely ignoring their typical forms of self-justification, which would stress the greater overall efficacy for individuals of a system of comprehensive universal provision (Hickson 2012). This in itself is typical of the historic inability of individualist thinking to understand the collective in general as anything other than a homogenising threat to the individual.

We could find another very different set of examples if we were to survey discursive fields such as television and cinema, even in popular fantasy and science fiction series: in the 1990s version of *Star Trek*, for example, the most terrifying interplanetary enemy faced by the 'Federation' of civilised races is not one of the warlike territorial races of earlier science-fiction (from H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* to the Klingons and Romulans of the first *Star Trek*), but the strange cyber-species 'the Borg', who are defined by their capacity to 'assimilate' all other life forms into the single collective intelligence of their 'hive': in the era of neoliberalism's most aggressive triumphalism (Stiglitz 2003) a more perfect expression of the individualist terror of all collectivity could hardly have been imagined. What we see dramatised here in extreme form is the general individualist tendency to conceptualise collectivity as such only and always as a threat to personal freedom and a condition of generalised negation.

This way of thinking about collectivity has specific implications for the conceptualisation of democracy. In particular, I would suggest

that it can ultimately only understand democracy in negative terms. I don't mean by this simply that it must denigrate democracy (although historically it usually has), but rather that within this frame of reference, democracy can only be understood in terms of what it negates and delimits, rather than in terms of what it makes possible or positively expresses. The most sophisticated development of this tendency is to be found in Mouffe's formulation of democracy as the institutionalisation of the emptiness and contestedness of the place of sovereignty, as discussed in the last chapter.

Liberalism versus Democracy

We might also suggest that the whole history of liberal democracy is in fact a history of democracy's delimitation and containment by liberalism. This may initially sounds like a strange proposition, given that everyday political discourse in the English-speaking world treats 'democracy' and liberalism as more or less synonymous. Ask many Anglophone politicians, journalists or citizens what 'democracy' means, and the first thing that they will mention in reply will be 'freedom of speech', 'human rights' or even 'individual freedom', none of which are by any means actually necessarily implied by any concept of 'democracy': rather these are all basic tenets of liberalism. In its proper usage, the word 'democracy' designates popular sovereignty, the rule of the people, but it does not necessarily guarantee to any one of those people any particular freedoms or protections. So why this habitual confusion? The main reason is that a specific form of democracy – liberal democracy – has been so successful, both practically and ideologically, that it has succeeded in making itself appear to many to be the only imaginable form of democracy. This itself is partly symptomatic of the fact that liberalism is simply so hegemonic within the Anglophone world that its specific character has become almost invisible to many observers: it defines 'common sense' assumptions to the point where many people are unaware of the possibility of thinking any other way, except with reference to imagined forms of collectivism which are inevitably caricatured as authoritarian, conservative and hierarchical ('communism', 'fundamentalism', etc.), and therefore opposed to democracy as such. But various writers over the years have pointed out that in fact the liberal valorisation of individual sovereignty and

the democratic principle of shared, collective sovereignty are, when carried to their logical conclusions, mutually exclusive.

It was Alexander de Tocqueville who famously warned that an unmitigated form of democracy could only lead to the 'tyranny of the majority'. Carl Schmitt, as Chantal Mouffe has done more than anyone else to remind contemporary readers (Mouffe 1999), famously identified and analysed the tension between liberalism and democracy (Mouffe 2000). The framers of the US constitution were certainly well aware of this tension, and it has always been clear that the constitution was not only a design for a democratic government but was also intended as an instrument for the disaggregation, neutralisation and delimitation of popular power (Zinn 2003, Hardt and Negri 2000) insofar as the latter could be construed as a threat to individual liberty, with its strong emphasis on the separation of powers, on the requirement for massive legislative majorities in order to enact certain kinds of legislation, and most importantly in the institution of the Bill of Rights. Now, the fact that it is predicated on a paradoxical pair of principles does not make liberal democracy an inherently nonsensical proposition. In fact, we could just as well say that the construction of a political system which manages to balance collective power against personal freedom is an admirable aim. However, the habitual elision of 'democracy' and 'liberal democracy' to which we have just referred does not acknowledge this paradoxical relationship between liberalism and democracy; rather it occludes it, and in doing so neutralises the political meaning of 'democracy' altogether. In effect, it reduces discussion of democracy to the discussion of its limits, and so reproduces the pattern according to which democracy is conceived only in negative terms.

Thinking Collectivity, from Donne to Marx

As we can see from the foregoing argument, the individualist tradition leaves us relatively incapable of thinking about democracy in anything but negative terms. For the remainder of this chapter, I want to explore some other ways of thinking about the social which have different implications for conceptualising democracy. Debates over the relationship between the individual and the group, and over the nature of the individual and the collective as such, have a very old history.

They are arguably traceable to the very beginnings of philosophy in the West, while the critique of the 'illusory' status of the individual ego has been a consistent theme in various traditions of Asian thought and meditative practice since very ancient times. For our purposes here, however, we shall confine ourselves to the 'West' and the modern era. Even within this frame of reference, it is clear that alternative perspectives accompanied the earliest emergence of modern forms of individualism. Perhaps the most famous example of this is to be found in John Donne's 1624 'Meditation XVII' (1975): his assertions that 'no man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main', and that 'any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind', have long been understood as a clear refutation of emergent modern individualism (Eliot 1921). An even closer contemporary of Hobbes, Gerrard Winstanley, the leader of the radical proto-communist group known as the 'Diggers' (Hill 1975), published his famous tract 'The True Levellers Standard Advanced: The State of Community Opened, and Presented to the Sons of Men' in 1649 (two years before the publication of *Leviathan*). The opening sentence of that pamphlet can be found as the epigraph to this chapter.

Both Donne's and Winstanley's anti-individualism were in part motivated by religious opposition to Puritanism, which as many historians and social theorists have explored was the main cultural expression of bourgeois, individualist ideology in the early modern epoch (Weber 1930, Tawney 1964) – although the fact that it was not the only such expression is demonstrated by how relatively uninterested Hobbes seems to have been in questions of religious doctrine.[2] A figure who stands between them in this sense, but quite apart in others, is the seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza. Spinoza is best known as the philosopher who proposed a completely different model of the relationship between consciousness and corporeality to that of his influential contemporary René Descartes. While Descartes (2010) saw the mind and the body as being radically separate (or at least predicated his theory of knowledge on this assumption), Spinoza (2000) argued that every emotional or intellectual state was also a physical state. Spinoza is often seen today as a great antecedent to later materialist thinkers because of his monistic assertion that there could ultimately be no type of substance in the universe that was ontologically distinct from matter. Although

Spinoza claimed that he was a pantheist rather than an atheist, this is not a distinction which orthodox theologies will normally allow, and he was duly excommunicated from the Jewish community into which he had been born.

The political and ethical implications of Spinoza's metaphysics are controversial to say the least, despite – or perhaps because of – the nominal dedication of all three of his major works – *Ethics*, *Theological–Political Treatise* and *Political Treatise* – to precisely this question. Spinoza can easily be read as a rationalist and a quietist, advocating the calm control of the emotions that can only come from recognising their physical dimension, and accepting a general ontology which seems to contain little room for individual free will; he can be read as a conservative, and certainly seems to advocate the subjugation of the individual to the common will in a decidedly Hobbesian manner; almost the final remark of his unfinished *Political Treatise* consists of his dismissal of the idea of women's equality to men.

And yet Spinoza has also been persuasively read as a radical thinker, the key resource available to us in avoiding any individualist or even meta-individualist conception of the social. An inspiration to such radical Marxist thinkers as Althusser and Balibar (Montag and Stolze 1997; Balibar 2008, 1994), sanctified by Deleuze and Guattari (1994) as the 'Christ of Philosophers', Spinoza is the main inspiration for Hardt and Negri's concept of the 'multitude'. What they mean by 'multitude' is in fact precisely the kind of group which I have suggested 'Leviathan logic' cannot imagine: organised on the basis of lateral relations between its members, defined neither by an over-homogeneity or by a condition of general disorganisation, possessing an ontological specificity which is quite different from that of the individual. The term is mobilised by Hobbes specifically to distinguish between a disorganised rabble or 'multitude' and a properly organised 'people' (Hobbes 1949), and it is against this conception that Negri (1991) reads Spinoza as positively endorsing a conception of sociality as the condition of possibility for all positive exercises of freedom and increases in human potential. Whether or not this is an accurate reading, and whether Spinoza was a seventeenth-century mystic or the first great modern atheist (or, as I tend to think, both), what is uncontroversial is that Spinoza's conceptions of power – which is always defined by the relation between a body and other bodies (Spinoza 2000) – and

freedom – which is never simply the freedom to dispose of property, but always the freedom to act in the world creatively – were radically different from those that would go on to inform the liberal tradition.

While the notion of an egalitarian, universal, inclusive fellowship of human beings remained an idea which was most closely associated with radical religious sects during the subsequent period, it was in the late eighteenth century that this idea acquired a new currency outside of Christian discourse. The philosophy of the Enlightenment and the political ideas which informed the revolutionary movements from France to Haiti to North America (Hobsbawm 1996) were never a homogeneous body of ideas, but in their common appeal to 'Reason' and to supposedly universal human values, they made possible a radical reconfiguration of political possibilities (Thompson 1964: 1–185).While arguably the most influential form of politics to emerge from this moment was the liberal republicanism which would become the basis for the US constitution, there were always other powerful currents at work. It was during this time that the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau produced his famous critique of Hobbes, arguing that the state of nature should not be understood as a state of war, and that the ideal society would be a kind of direct democracy on the Athenian model, wherein legitimate sovereignty would be an expression of the 'general will' (Rousseau 1968). But importantly, Rousseau seems to have imagined the ideal community which would express such a general will as decidedly homogeneous in character: a meta-individual, albeit a self-governing one. Rousseau's concerns and prejudices were very close to those of the thinkers and artists who came to be associated with the 'Romanticism' of the period, as, perhaps, were some of the implicit contradictions in his work. Like the Enlightenment, to which it is often seen as some kind of direct response, Romanticism was a multifaceted and heterogeneous formation, and its contribution to thinking about the nature of individuality is complex. On the one hand, the personality cults which formed around figures such as Beethoven, Goethe, Wordsworth and Byron are generally credited with creating the ideal of the 'Great Artist' as a unique and especially gifted type of individual, rather than as the inheritor of a traditional set of advanced craft skills, whose unique personality was the source of their art and their 'genius'. This was a powerful idea which has had a lasting legacy, not only in prevalent ideas about art

and creativity, but in the persistence of what we might call 'expressive individualism' as a general model of selfhood: in other words, the idea that the interior life of individuals is at once the most private and the most important aspect of their existence, and that personal happiness depends upon individuals finding ways to communicate this aspect of themselves to others, either publicly through creative work or forms of personal display (from fashion to gardening), privately in intimate relationships, or through various forms of consumption (Campbell 1987, Steedman 1986). On the other hand, the idea of the artist as an irreducibly public figure, whose work 'belonged' not to private patrons but to either the nation or to humanity in general (Williams 1958), as well as the idea of artists as those whose authority and power derive from their capacity to communicate emotions in a manner which made them shareable, was always inherently problematic for the liberal individualist tradition: hence the persistent tension between 'art' and 'commerce' which was to define cultural debates for so long afterwards.

This was also precisely the moment which would produce the two defining philosophers of the modern epoch, whose differences certainly touch directly upon the question of the nature of individuality. Immanuel Kant, trying to construct a philosophical edifice which could defend Christian morality and liberal individualism against the radical empiricism and implicit atheism of David Hume (Hume 2007, 2009), would insist on the ultimate impossibility of knowing the world beyond our conceptions of it, but also upon the stability and universality of the categories structuring those perceptions (the latter assumption being the most vulnerable to later anthropological investigations) (Kant 2007). Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel would posit one of the most intricate and impenetrable philosophical systems ever devised in what was arguably an attempt to develop a less reductive theory of experience which could take account of the complex relationality which defines both the identity of phenomena and our experience of them (Hegel 1977), demonstrating what Pinkard (1994) calls 'the sociality of reason'. Hegel's project might have led him to the conclusion that the Prussian state represented the highest form of human culture and the most authentic expression of human freedom (Hegel 1967), but it was to be a major influence on the most important critic of individualist thought in European history: Karl Marx.

Marx and Engels: Contingency, Complexity and Determinism

Marx is the central figure in the story of the evolution of socialist thought in the nineteenth century, but he is not the first. 'Socialism' and 'individualism' were in fact both terms first used by the early French socialist thinker, Henri de Saint-Simon and by the followers of the British reformer Robert Owen in the early nineteenth century (Hobsbawm 1996). But it was Marx who was to develop a fully fledged theory of historical change, social organisation and economics which both broke completely with the tenets of liberal theory and thoroughly critiqued the system of social relations which it had come to authorise, without giving any quarter to nostalgic or conservative sentiments. There have been countless different readings and interpretations of Marx over the years, normally dependent for their emphases on the particular interests and concerns of their authors, and the present case will be no different.[3]

The aspects of Marx's analytical and political project that I want to stress here, however, are not particularly controversial. Marx's first philosophical premises are simply the basic materialist postulate – that no supernatural force and no non-corporeal agencies are at work in the world – and that human existence is by definition social and co-operative in character. All human beings, except those living under the most exceptional circumstances, are dependent upon some form of co-operation and collaboration with others in order to secure the basic material conditions for their own continued existence and, eventually, that of their offspring. This is true whether those forms of co-operation involve hunting and gathering wild plants for food, or agreeing to work towards the economic aims of a large corporation in return for a fixed quantity of cash which can be exchanged elsewhere for manufactured products, or any other situation in which co-ordinated human activity leads to the production and distribution of material goods. It is the particular way of organising such co-operation which Marx calls the 'mode of production'. Any given mode of production will be characterised by a particular set of social relations – the 'relations of production' – which distributes both tasks and rewards amongst various groups of social actors, who are all understood to be engaged in the overall task of producing and reproducing the material conditions for human life. These social relations will generate, and

will be informed by, a particular set of systemic imperatives which will tend to direct the behaviour of participants towards fulfilling their role within the overall system of production (even if that role is as apparently abstract as training university students in the skills they will need to manage complex flows of information in future managerial positions). This set of imperatives will resonate throughout the culture of the society, tending to legitimate the existing relations of production, even if they do not necessarily dictate its explicit cultural norms. From this perspective, every individual's mode of existence is a product primarily of the specific sets of social relationships which they inhabit (Marx and Engels 1970).

One of Marx's primary criticisms of the capitalist mode of production is that it tends to produce a situation in which the participants are unaware of the real nature of the social relations in which they participate. In particular the mechanism of 'commodity fetishism' as described by Marx (1995) encourages consumers to invest significance in actual commodities rather than in the productive and essentially co-operative relationships which make possible their production. Marx's aim in his analysis is firstly to reveal to workers the fact that their mutual relations are in fact already inherently co-operative, even though they may perceive them quite differently; secondly to reveal the extent to which their employers' relations with them are inherently exploitative; thirdly to propose that once this has been realised it should become possible for workers to continue to function co-operatively without their employer's intervention and without their employers taking a large proportion of the profits generated from the sale of the produced goods for their private use. This latter state of affairs is more or less precisely what Marx and others mean by 'socialism'; and of course Marx assumes that the process by which it will be brought about, eventually excluding the class of employers from their privileged but ultimately parasitic role in the relations of production, will be one of fierce, sustained and often violent political conflict.

One of the great and persistent controversies surrounding Marx's theory of change turns on the question of its degree of 'determinism' (a question which also persists in relation to the work of his two great anti-individualist antecedents, Spinoza and Hegel): in other words, the question of how far it sees historical outcomes and everyday

experiences as more or less predetermined by the impersonal internal logic of social processes, and how far they might be subject to conscious human intervention. Marx's own famous formulation is that 'men make their own history', but not under conditions of their choosing, which is a serviceable first answer to the question, but doesn't get us very far once we start to think about it. For Marx very clearly does not believe that *individual* men 'make their own history': rather it is only through conscious or unconscious collective action that they do so. And clearly, for the most part, according to Marx, 'men' are relatively unaware of the 'true' purpose of their collective actions. For example, what the radical protestants of the early seventeenth century *thought* they were doing was to purify the Christian church and build a kingdom of the Godly; what they were actually doing was sweeping away the residual cultural obstacles to the emergence of a full-blown market society and creating the conditions for large-scale capital accumulation. Although Marx and some of his followers have occasionally been criticised for the implicit arrogance and condescension inherent in this form of analysis, assuming as it does that theorists always knows better than their subjects,[4] the subsequent history of industrial capitalism – and the evident absence of Godly kingdoms from the Earth – certainly seem to lend Marx's theory some validity. The question then becomes: to what extent can even well-organised collectives on any scale (movements, parties, tribes, nations, unions, churches, etc.) actually shape historical outcomes, and to what extent must they always remain unknowing dupes of 'the cunning of history'?

It's not clear that Marx ever fully answered this question to his own satisfaction, and the fact that his oeuvre does not ultimately contain a properly developed theory of politics is arguably testament to this fact. We might even suggest that the main task of Marxist and 'post-Marxist' theory since his day has been to develop such a theory (or rather many competing theories) (Lenin 1970, Gramsci 1971, Laclau and Mouffe 1985). It is certainly worth reflecting that a particular reading of Marx's theory of history would indeed tend to the view that there is very little conscious intervention which can be made by political agents, and would not see his personal commitment to revolutionary activism as effectively legitimated by his own theory.[5] Nonetheless, what is clear is that Marx believed it should be possible for human beings collectively to take control of their own destinies by coming to an awareness of

the extent to which their modes of productive co-operation influenced every other aspect of their social and material existence, and he believed that political organisation would be necessary in order to bring this about. Surely this is obvious enough from the fact that Marx was a lifelong revolutionary activist? – if he had thought that such change would necessarily occur irrespective of political intervention, why would he have bothered at all? In fact, I would propose that it was not the determination of social relations by economic relations which Marx ultimately wanted to convince his readers of, but the opposite: he wanted to demonstrate the variability of forms of social life and the consequent possibility of transforming those obtaining within industrial societies. As such it was the historical contingency and *changeability* of social formations to which Marx drew attention, and the fact that 'economic' relations are woven into the fabric of all other social, political and cultural relations, rather than being in any way separable from them. Marx's aim was not to convince people that historical change was the expression of an ineluctable teleology, but that by reorganising economic relations, social relations in general could be transformed for the better.

It is this claim which has been subject to perhaps the most tediously and persistently misconceived criticism in the history of political thought.[6] For it is in trying to make this case that Marx and his collaborator Friedrich Engels mobilised their notorious metaphor of the 'base' and the 'superstructure', which imagined the relations of production within any social formation as the foundation upon which the edifice of cultural and political life rested (Williams 1977, Laclau 1990). It is easy to see that from a contemporary vantage point this is quite an unfortunate metaphor, which implies that the structures in place are static and largely immovable and that there is no complex dynamism to their relationships. But it is also surely clear that this was never how Marx viewed things: his theory is nothing if not a theory of ongoing social change. The truth is that the 'base–superstructure' metaphor was a polemical device deployed against an idealist world view – in particular, that inherited from Romanticism, and from Hegel and his contemporaries – which saw *no connection whatsoever* between political ideas, cultural forms, and economic interests and practices.

This is not just my personal opinion: it is in fact exactly what Engels wrote in a famous letter to Joseph Bloch on just this topic (Engels 1890).

In this letter Engels deals directly with the question of his and Marx's 'economic determinism'. Before quoting from the letter directly, it is worth considering just what has historically been at stake in the charge of 'economic determinism' which has been levelled at Marx and Engels so often. On the one hand, this determinism is understood as implying that changes to the form and organisation of economic life have a determining effect on all other aspects of social existence, from science to religion to politics to popular culture. On the other hand, politically, it has historically tended to authorise a theory of politics which understands militant trade unionism (organisation 'in the base') and revolutionary anti-capitalism to be the only legitimate or purposeful forms of political activity (hence the marginalisation of feminist demands within the socialist and communist movements for most of the twentieth century) (Sassoon 1996: 407–40; 647–90). Neither of these charges seems to me to be sustainable as an interpretation of Marx's own theory, but there is also no question that they were interpretations accepted by some of Marx's followers, with unfortunate consequences. It is interesting to see how Engels responded on both these points. He writes:

> According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Other than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure – political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas – also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form*. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (that is, of things and events whose inner interconnection is so remote or so impossible of proof that we can regard it as non-existent, as negligible), the economic

movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree.

We make our history ourselves, but, in the first place, under very definite assumptions and conditions. Among these the economic ones are ultimately decisive. But the political ones, etc., and indeed even the traditions which haunt human minds also play a part, although not the decisive one…

In the second place, however, history is made in such a way that the final result always arises from conflicts between many individual wills, of which each in turn has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life. Thus there are innumerable intersecting forces, an infinite series of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant – the historical event. This may again itself be viewed as the product of a power which works as a whole *unconsciously* and without volition. For what each individual wills is obstructed by everyone else, and what emerges is something that no one willed. Thus history has proceeded hitherto in the manner of a natural process and is essentially subject to the same laws of motion. But from the fact that the wills of individuals – each of whom desires what he is impelled to by his physical constitution and external, in the last resort economic, circumstances (either his own personal circumstances or those of society in general) – do not attain what they want, but are merged into an aggregate mean, a common resultant, it must not be concluded that they are equal to zero. On the contrary, each contributes to the resultant…

Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasise the main principle *vis-à-vis* our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to give their due to the other elements involved in the interaction. (Engels 1890)

Even here there is a degree of ambiguity to Engels' response. On the one hand, he seems to argue for a view of social change as complex and multifaceted, to reject economic determinism and to acknowledge that his commitment to it was only ever a polemical tactic. On the other hand, he does keep insisting on the '*ultimately*' determining

status of economic relations, although it is never entirely clear what this means. Commentators have fretted over this issue considerably, perhaps the most famous attempt to resolve it being Althusser's formula according to which the economic is determinate 'in the last instance', and yet 'the lonely hour of the "last instance" never comes' (1969: 113). This formulation appears at a key moment in Althusser's own conceptual development, where he is specifically trying to develop a Marxian theory which can take full account of the complex dynamics informing the relationships between different elements of a social process, from which the 'phantom' of Hegel has been driven 'back into the night' (Althusser 1969: 103).[7] Hegel, at this point in the evolution of Althusser's thought, is seen as inspiring those dimensions of Marx's thought which would retain a teleological and therefore overly deterministic, as well as humanistic character. Althusser's attempt to develop a highly complex theory of social formations would eventually lead him to concede the argument made by two of his British followers, Paul Hirst and Barry Hindess (Hindess and Hirst 1975), that the whole notion of economic determination 'in the last instance' and of different elements of the superstructure being only 'relatively autonomous' from the base was unsustainable, and that consequently the very concept of 'mode of production' should be dropped in favour of the more flexible notion of 'social formation' (Hindess and Hirst 1977).

What this all makes clear, as commentators such as Laclau and Derrida have suggested before (Laclau 1990: 1–39, Derrida 1994), is a tension within the thought of Marx and Engels, which arguably is simply never resolved, between an understanding of both social relations and historical change as highly complex, contingent, unpredictable and malleable, and an understanding of them as ultimately subject to a singular ordering principle, in terms both of their organisation at any given moment and of their ultimate historical destiny. The contradiction which Laclau identifies is between a theory of historical change in Marx which is consistent with the famous assertion of the *Communist Manifesto* that 'all history is the history of class struggle', and one which understands the driving force of change to be the endogenous logic of 'the development of the productive forces' (Laclau 1990). According to Laclau, it is wrong to think that the groups whose struggles for power of various kinds drive historical

change can only be conceptualised as classes, rather than as any other kind of collective formation, but apart from that the former statement is basically correct. Laclau contrasts this idea with the claim Marx makes elsewhere, that social, political and cultural change only tend to occur when, and because, existing social forms have become a fetter on the further development of human productive capacity. In historiographical terms, the only real way to test these contrasting hypotheses is to see how convincing an explanation they offer for the emergence of modern capitalism: was it the contingent outcome of a range of socio-political struggles, or was it the almost inevitable consequence of the voyages of discovery (flooding Europe with currency and trade opportunities) and the scientific revolution (leading inevitably to radical changes in agriculture and the industrial revolution)? Ultimately of course, it is impossible to know for sure. What concerns us more here are the very abstract differences between the two models: on the one hand, a view of social relations as inherently complex and contingent, on the other a view which understands their contradictions to be wholly internal to their status as an overall unified object.

This latter point is very important, because one of the key questions which emerges here is how far social formations can be understood as composed of complex articulations of heterogeneous elements, and how far all of the apparent differences between those elements must be seen merely as internal differentiations of some higher unity or 'totality' (Lukács 1971). The latter is arguably the key idea of Hegel's entire metaphysics, persists in forms of Marxist analysis which remain attached to a simple notion of the 'social totality' (the whole ensemble of social relations in a given society, or on the entire planet), and is an assumption which is arguably implicitly reiterated whenever someone speak or writes about 'society' or 'a society', or even uses a phrase such as 'a capitalist society' (a phrase which tends to imply that capitalist social relations define every element of the totality). The former is an idea that a whole range of different concepts have been mobilised in order to express in recent years – 'social formation', 'discursive formation' (Foucault 1972), 'assemblage' (DeLanda 2006, Deleuze and Guattari 1988), 'antagonism', etc. For Marx and many of his followers, the differences also seem to map onto different understandings of what is meant by that extraordinarily polyvalent term, 'communism'. On the one hand, in *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels say that

> [c]ommunism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence. (Marx and Engels 1970: 56–7)

On the other hand, they at times seem to endorse something close to the Saint-Simonian vision of the substitution of politics and government for 'the administration of things' (Engels 1901: 86, Marx and Engels 1967: 105) as a description of what the 'future state' of communism would entail. This formulation has been read as expressing a belief in the possibility and desirability of an eventual elimination of all conflict from human societies that arguably haunts the entire philosophical tradition, and which always has authoritarian implications, to the extent that it ultimately treats difference and multiplicity as negatives: contradictions to be resolved rather than irreducible aspects of existence (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Laclau 1990, Derrida 1994), or even necessary conditions for creativity (Deleuze 1994: 207). Marx and Engels are certainly at their most Hegelian when they seem to posit communism as the putative end state of human history, wherein all of humanity will participate in a single, self-aware, 'self-identical', self-governing community, and it could be argued that this vision is in fact shaped by the basic logic of meta-individualism, with its emphasis on unicity and homogeneity (i.e. non-contradiction, non-antagonism) (Derrida 1994: 99). Conversely, they are at their least meta-individualist when positing 'communism' as a complex and open-ended *process*.

The meta-individualist, determinist version of Marxism has clearly informed the theory and practice of Marxist politics through much of its history. As a political activist, Marx himself was notoriously dogmatic, and persistently ruthless in his attempts to win and retain ideological control of the organisations be belonged to. The fiercest debate within the International Workingmen's Association was that between Marx and the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin on the question of how revolutionary socialists envisaged deploying the machinery of the state in the event of a revolution. Marx notoriously imagined a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' wherein the political representatives of the working class would use that machinery to repress their political

opponents and secure the necessary conditions for the construction of socialism: Bakunin (1990) argued that such a strategy could only ever lead to an ongoing, undemocratic dictatorship of the workers' party which would not install a genuinely democratic and egalitarian set of social relations; it must be acknowledged that history seems to have proved Bakunin right.

Marx wrote relatively little about the practice of actual revolutionary organisation, but it is easy enough to trace a line leading from this debate with Bakunin to the Leninist theory of the revolutionary party, and its characteristic doctrine of 'democratic centralism', according to which there can be no legitimate expression of dissent from a party line once it has been determined (Lenin 1970). Antonio Gramsci's advocacy of the ideal of the mass party as a 'modern prince' shares in just the same meta-individualist logic. Gramsci's famous essay on this topic (which is really just a set of notes for a possible essay) reflects on what the implications might be of abstracting from Machiavelli's classic treatise on government, *The Prince*, a general theory of politics which would inform the practice of a revolutionary party. Gramsci imagines such a party acting as a single collective agent towards 'the formation of a national–popular collective will, of which the modern Prince is at one and the same time the organiser and the active, operative expression' (Gramsci 1971: 133). Significantly, when considering the relationship between collective subjectivity and leadership in this essay, Gramsci writes, in a perfect expression of Leviathan logic, entirely in tune with Freud's model of group-formation, that

> for a party to exist, three fundamental elements (three groups of elements) have to converge:
> 1. A mass element, composed of ordinary, average men, whose participation takes the form of discipline and loyalty, rather than any creative spirit or organisational ability.
> 2. The principal cohesive element, which centralises nationally and renders effective and powerful a complex of forces which left to themselves would count for little or nothing. This element is endowed with great cohesive, centralising and disciplinary powers ... One speaks of generals without an army, but in reality it is easier to form an army than to form generals. So much is this true that an already existing army is destroyed if it loses its generals, while

> the existence of a united group of generals who agree among themselves and have common aims soon creates an army even where none exists.
> 3. An intermediate element, which articulates the first element with the second and maintains contact between them, not only physically but also morally and intellectually. (Gramsci 1971: 152)

We see here even in Grasmci, the great hero of Western Marxism, a statement of a clearly and thoroughly verticalist set of assumptions as to the necessary logic of collective organisation.

Participatory Democracy and the Politics of Horizontality

So it is clear from all of these examples that Marxian thought contains a strand which is characterised by meta-individualism and verticalism. However, it must be clear too that a powerful alternative current also runs through both Marx's thought and some of the traditions which it has inspired. As I have already suggested, the very possibility of socialism and of political agency in general rests for Marx upon a recognition of the complexity and malleability of social relations and on their inherently co-operative and creative character. Marx saw the radically democratic practices of the Paris Commune as a model for the future shape of workers' democracy, and even before that, the 1867 constitution of the International Workingmen's Association, of which he was the chief author, had opened with the assertion 'that the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves'. In the pursuit of this ideal, dissident strands of socialism, communism and anarchism have consistently sought out modes of self-organisation which could involve all participants as equally as possible, avoiding both hierarchy and the demand that differences be subjugated to the collective discipline of a party line. For the anarchists of the nineteenth century, this seems to have been largely a question of how they imagined the construction of a post-socialist future – normally through a voluntary federation of local communes instead of a centralised deployment of state institutions – rather than of how they organised themselves in the present: in practice they were at least as dogmatic and schismatic as their socialist contemporaries. Nonetheless, this ideal of political autonomy and 'ground-up'

democracy would have a profound resonance with later generations of radical activists, and would come to form one of the resources for a general critique, not just of existing revolutionary practice, but of the limitations of liberal and social democracy in the mid twentieth century (Miller 1987, Gitlin 1993, Polletta 2002, Curl 2009).

The radicals of the nineteenth century were preoccupied with the question of what a future society would look like, and tended to assume that, given the likelihood of a rapid, complete and imminent abolition of all capitalist social relations, this was the really important question to be decided: what's more, they were working under conditions wherein the extension of political democracy to the entire adult population was still a distant prospect; possibly not much less so than the prospect of socialist revolution. By the middle of the next century, their successors had had real experience of actual socialist revolutions and their outcomes – in particular the degeneration of the Soviet Union into a totalitarian nightmare under Stalin, which seemed to confirm all of the worst fears of Bakunin and his sympathisers – and also of highly successful reformist movements extending both suffrage rights and a vast range of social entitlements to the working classes. As such, with the emergence of the 'New Lefts' in the 1960s, the question of democratic forms and practices within the movement took on a new importance, as did the possibility of making radical democratic demands that might fall short of full-scale socialist revolution (Poletta 2002). The demand for 'participatory democracy', as an alternative both to the limitations of representative liberal democracy and to the hierarchy and authoritarianism of mainstream socialism and communism, was first formulated as such by Western theorists and activists at this time – while the ideal of 'workers' self-management' was emerging as a response to the bureaucratic and centralised power structures of both capitalist and socialist institutions – and it has become an increasingly important dimension of radical practice and theory since then (Maeckelbergh 2009).

Within the various radical movements against neoliberalism which have emerged since the 1990s (Tormey 2004, Gilbert 2008b), this demand has taken on its most fully developed form, to the extent that in some senses, the only thing which defines the coherence and consistency of those movement at all is their commitment to and dissemination of techniques of radical and participatory organisation

and decision making (Maeckelbergh 2009). The key institution of the global 'anti-capitalist' or 'global justice' movement (Notes from Nowhere 2003), the World Social Forum, is a huge regular gathering of NGOs, political organisations, labour and government bodies which is partly constituted on the basis of a rejection of traditional models of representative democracy (forbidding formal participation by political parties, for example) (Smith 2007). It was initially held in Porto Alegre, the Brazilian city made famous by the policy of 'participatory budgeting' pioneered by its leftist municipal government, according to which city budgets are determined, not by an executive of elected legislators and civil servants, but by a rolling process of federated local assemblies (Wainwright 2009). More recent movements such as 'Occupy' and the Spanish 'Indignados' have been even more definitively radical democratic. Their demands often seem to lack any precise content beyond a general refusal of the legitimacy of neoliberal post-democracy, but if they are unified by anything then it is by a characteristic commitment to highly participatory and egalitarian modes of discussion and decision making. These will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. What is of particular interest to us here is the way in which, around the end of the 1990s, the difference between these modes of organisation and those typifying more traditional types of political organisation began to be discussed by activists in terms of a perceived difference between 'verticals' and 'horizontals'.

This was a rhetorical distinction which had a number of sources and a range of implications. Firstly, as I have already explained, it had clear roots in the communist and anarchist traditions and in the theory and practice of the New Left. Secondly, this language emerged as part of a widely influential discourse which understood 'networked' forms of organisation as inherently more progressive and dynamic than more stable, centralised or hierarchical forms (Juris 2008). This was in turn derived from a number of sources in cybernetics, economics, management and organisational theory, in the popular futurology of figures such as Alvin Toffler (1980) and the writers of *Wired* magazine. Corporate management theory had advocated 'flat management' and decentralised decision making since at least the early 1980s, while economists influenced by the neo-Marxist 'Regulation School' (Aglietta and Fernbach 1979) observed that leading-edge firms were

indeed adopting such models in a bid to reduce costs and increase their responsiveness to fluctuations in market conditions. The popularisation of the Internet – the basic architecture of which had been designed as deliberately decentralised in order to preserve its integrity from possible nuclear attacks – gave credence to the claims of social theorists such as Manuel Castells, who saw the network as the emergent paradigmatic form of almost all sets of social relations (1996).

Unsurprisingly, the claim that the network form was in some sense inherently progressive was easily undermined (Terranova 2004). Apart from anything else, the fact that power may be differently distributed in a network does not mean that it is evenly distributed: it is merely concentrated at key nodes rather than being located at the top of an easily describable hierarchy of relations (and as such, the nature of its distribution may actually be more opaque and less easy to engage with). However, it would be too easy to dismiss the rhetoric of horizontality as a simple derivation from post-Fordist management theory or naive cyber-utopianism. As Boltanski and Chiapello have shown (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, Gilbert 2008a), the adoption by management theorists in the 1980s of similar language – praising the virtues of 'flat' organisational structure, decentralised decision-making and collective creative dynamism – came only *after* the strong emergence at the end of the 1960s of demands for participatory democracy – in the community, the polity and the workplace – posed a major threat to the ongoing hegemony of capital. At the same time, even while it would always have been naive to expect the technology of the World Wide Web to have a politically transformative effect in and of itself, there is no reason why its emergence should not become an occasion for demands to see its democratic potential explored and exploited to the full. Given the history of meta-individualist verticalism which we have elaborated in this book so far, it should be clear that the demand for horizontality amounted to a serious challenge to a deeply entrenched, but extremely problematic, set of assumptions and conceptual habits within Western political discourse.

Of course, the debate between the 'horizontals' and the 'verticals' can become ridiculous. At their most extreme the horizontals sometimes refuse to recognise the legitimacy of any organisational form which depends on any system of representation and delegation, believing that this inevitably leads to undesirable concentrations of power

in the hands of the representatives and constitutes an illegitimate hierarchy between representatives and represented. There are several problems with this approach. The first is that it depends upon a very simplistic understanding of the logic of representation, which need not necessarily be understood as installing such simple hierarchies. The second, following on from this, is that it entirely ignores the very rich history of attempts to engineer functional and genuinely democratic systems of representation: for example, the labour-movement tradition of agitating for the direct accountability of delegates to their constituencies (Sassoon 1996). The third is that it simply ignores the existence and claims to legitimacy of those political traditions wherein vertical organisation has been apparently effective. I recall a meeting in London to plan for the 2004 European Social Forum at which a group of horizontals were debating with a trade-union official, completely unwilling to accept his claim to superior legitimacy on the basis of the thousands of union members he 'represented': one wondered what those members would have made of having their own claims to representation so comprehensively dismissed. The fourth is that advocates of 'pure' horizontality are always faced with a logical problem to the extent that they themselves wish to alter or influence the behaviour of others in any way, because any attempt to do that must constitute, however marginally, an attempt at leadership of some kind (Gilbert 2008b: 219–22).

In fact, it is surely the case that *any* social formation – indeed even any given object, person, or body – is constituted by both vertical and horizontal sets of relations (and possibly diagonal ones too). From this perspective, it is interesting to compare Ernesto Laclau's approach to this issue with that of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. As we saw in the previous chapter, Laclau recognises the existence of both a populist and an 'institutionalist' dimension to any socio-political formation, and this is a distinction which more or less corresponds to the distinction between vertical and horizontal as we are using it here.[8] Despite this, Laclau writes a great deal about the logic of populism, but, as we saw in the last chapter, only offers rather sketchy descriptions of its opposite. Deleuze and Guattari famously open their most important work – *A Thousand Plateaus* – with a celebratory description of the 'rhizome' (literally, a form of lateral stem which plays the same role as a root system in many types of plant) as the ideal embodiment of

a distributed, networked, mobile, horizontal, decentralised mode of relationality, which they compare with the structured, sedentary, definitive hierarchy of tree-like or 'arborescent' relationships. Although this opening essay of the book has done much to popularise the assumption that Deleuze and Guattari are pro-rhizome and anti-tree, by the end of the volume any reader is aware that this is not their position: rather, they recognise a 'rhizomatic' and 'arborescent' dimension to all social relations (perhaps to all relations of any kind whatsoever) and a historic bias towards the latter in Western thought, but they no longer wish to assert the permanent preferability of the one over the other.[9] In both of these cases, there are good reasons for the theorists in question to place particular emphasis on one or the other element of the equation, but neither of them would claim that either can actually be accorded a normative or ontological priority. Of course, it would be simplistic and simply misleading to try to claim that these two sets of distinctions (populist–institutionalist, arborescent–rhizomatic) can simply be mapped onto each other,[10] or collapsed into the distinction between horizontal and vertical relations. Ultimately the point here is that an understanding of the true complexity of social relations demands an attention to the irreducibility of multiple logics in their constitution, such that any attempt to valorise one such logic – either as the only one that functions at all, or as the only one that can inform legitimate forms of political organisation – can only result in a distorted picture. Importantly, this is a perspective which is ultimately incompatible with any manifestation of meta-individualism, to the extent that the latter always sees the social as ultimately governed and informed by a single ordering principle.

This issue of grasping the inherent complexity of social relations is a crucial one when considering the legacy of Marx's thought. The key difference which Laclau identifies between his and Marx's understandings of the social effects of capitalism turns on exactly this issue. Laclau points out that 'classical Marxism' expected the ongoing development of capitalism to lead to a *simplification* of the social structure – as the gap between bourgeoisie and proletariat became starker and more visible, while the intermediary elements were all absorbed into the working class – whereas in fact capitalist development in recent decades has led to a complexification of social structure, as class positions become more confused (consider, for

example, how difficult it is to pinpoint the class location of wage-earners who benefitted from the UK and US property booms of the 2000s, or whose lifelong income is highly dependent upon the stock-market performance of their pension funds' investments) and as culture, lifestyles and social roles become more fluid and fragmentary.[11] This is a very strong argument that need not detract from any appreciation of the predictive power of Marxism. The latter remained remarkably prescient up until the 1950s, when the full emergence of Fordist welfare capitalism produced a very different social formation from anything that Marx could have envisaged, largely because of the complex interaction between a capitalism which proved more adaptive to challenges from organised labour and revolutionary socialism than anyone in Marx's day had imagined possible, and the existence of a range of social forces whose political demands did not, as expected, converge upon class demands. Instead, as Laclau and Mouffe point out (1985), these demands proliferated in many directions after the cultural revolution of the 1960s.

However, even while this state of affairs poses problems for classical Marxism at the level of political strategy – because a strategy predicated on the solidarity and political unity of the working class seems increasingly unlikely to succeed – it remains the case that the Marxian analytical framework still offers some of the best conceptual tools with which to understand it. Even if we accept, with Laclau and other post-Marxist thinkers such as Deleuze and Guattari, that the novelty of our present historical situation demands the invention of new analytical concepts, the basic Marxian postulates as to the nature of capital and capitalism remain indispensable to any effective political analysis. The political and theoretical current which has done most to try to preserve and amplify those elements of Marx's own thinking which would seem able to explain changes in capitalism and its cultures since the 1960s is arguably Italian 'autonomism'.[12] Perhaps the founding conceptual gesture of autonomism is Mario Tronti's 1964 assertion that

> [w]e … have worked with a concept that puts capitalist development first, and workers second. This is a mistake. And now we have to turn the problem on its head, reverse the polarity, and start again from the beginning: and the beginning is the class struggle of the

> working class. At the level of socially developed capital, capitalist development becomes subordinated to working-class struggles; it follows behind them, and they set the pace to which the political mechanisms of capital's own reproduction must be tuned. (Tronti 1964)[13]

Obviously this is very close to Laclau's perspective on Marx, notwithstanding the almost implacable hostility between Tronti's contemporary followers and Laclau (Casarino and Negri 2008, Laclau 2001), the reasons for which may become clear in a moment.

Enter the Multitude

The most important of these followers is undoubtedly Antonio Negri, best known in the Anglophone world for his collaborations with Michael Hardt. Following Tronti's perspective, Hardt and Negri have argued, for example, that the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism must be understood as having been primarily driven by the challenge to the Fordist social settlement posed by militant workers, women, young people, and non-whites, rather than by the instrumental agency of capital itself. Negri has always been committed to a reading of Marx that emphasises the creative dynamism inherent in social existence, and has drawn heavily on thinkers such as Foucault, Deleuze, but above all Spinoza, in order to flesh out this version of Marxist thought. As we saw in Chapter 1, in their most celebrated joint work, *Empire*, Hardt and Negri posit a history of European modernity according to which its originary moment is not the emergence of the modern individual or the invention of capitalism, but a general assertion of the creative power of human activity in the world, which they associate with the most advanced philosophy of medieval Europe and the Renaissance: a rejection of metaphysical and religious notions of power, sovereignty and divinity in which 'knowledge shifted from the transcendent plane to the immanent' (2000: 72). This is an inventive but somewhat tendentious account which they support mainly with references to a handful of medieval thinkers who seem to gesture towards the kind of 'philosophy of immanence' that was codified and celebrated by Deleuze (Widder 2002), without any evidence that these writings were symptomatic of any wider social, cultural or political changes. It

would be churlish to dismiss their narrative on this basis, however, and in fact their own subsequent work offers some interesting resources with which potentially to justify it. In particular the section of their 2009 book *Commonwealth*, which celebrates the modern metropolis as the natural home and 'inorganic body' of 'the multitude' (2009: 249), offers potential resources with which to supplement this account of modernity, making it possible to see the re-urbanisation of Europe in the Middle Ages, with the growth of the great mercantile cities, their proto-republican civic politics and their relatively egalitarian cultures (Howell 2010), as the cultural and material expression of this same tendency to propose 'immanent' rather than 'transcendent' models of power and sovereignty.[14] For Hardt and Negri, the dominant 'modern' idea of sovereignty – of which they cite Hobbes as the great theorist and exemplar – must be seen as a counter-revolutionary *reaction* to this egalitarian revolution. In the terms that we have established in this chapter, Hardt and Negri therefore see the Hobbesian verticalist tradition as a direct response to the emergence of a radical mode of thought and practice which is resolutely horizontalist in its principles and implication.

This account is obviously extremely useful for our discussion here, although it is also problematic to the extent that it actually seems to accord very little role to capitalism as such in the formation of European modernity. On the one hand, I would argue – as in Chapter 1 – that this is a persistent problem in Hardt and Negri's accounts of modernity in general and of the present conjuncture in particular: their descriptions of these phenomena rarely pay much attention to the history of liberalism, the functional role of individualist ideology, or liberal modes of governmentality (and this despite the fact that the key theorist of the latter was Michel Foucault, who is one of their key theoretical sources), or to the success of neoliberalism as a hegemonic strategy. Arguably the extraordinary optimism of their political pronouncements is dependent upon precisely this blind spot: if we look at twenty-first-century culture, but see only the Internet, globalisation, and the growth of great cosmopolitan cities – ignoring the socio-cultural consequences of neoliberalism and its success at inhibiting the growth of potent collectivities – then it is easy to be convinced that the communist millennium is near at hand. On the other hand, however, Hardt and Negri's approach does make sense in

the light of their own key assumption about the relationship between capital and the multitude, which is that the former is always essentially *parasitic* upon the latter. From this perspective, the great leaps in our collective capability – from the rise of the medieval city states, to the scientific and industrial revolutions, from the emergence of modern communication media to the growth of the World Wide Web – have never been *dependent* upon capital or its agencies, but have in fact always been expressions of the extraordinary creative power inherent in human sociality; capitalism, which depends upon the exploitation, enclosure, privatisation and commodification of this power, is just what you get once a Hobbesian model of sovereignty is *imposed* from the outside upon this general field of productive relations.

'Multitude' is the name which Hardt and Negri give to this field, and to the form of inherently democratic collective subjectivity which seems to be immanent to it. In fact Hardt and Negri are, by their own admission, often rather vague about what kind of an entity 'the multitude' actually is: perhaps it would be fairer to say that as a concept it is constantly under revision, but that what the term always designates is a conceptualisation of collective subjectivity which is radically different from Hobbes's model of a people. In fact one of their most recent formulations describes the multitude as a 'constant process of metamorphosis grounded in the common' (2009: 173). From their earliest formulation of it, Hardt and Negri insist that one of the definitive features of the multitude is that it is a form of collectivity which does not impose an identity upon its constituent elements, being instead composed of 'singularities'. 'Singularity' is a difficult term with a complex genealogy, but for our purposes it is perhaps most useful to understand it as a way of referring to the *uniqueness* of a particular entity, phenomenon, or experiential element, while specifically declining to refer to it as 'individual' (Deleuze 1994, 2004). This is a simplification; but in the case of the singular person, it is possible to acknowledge that each person is unique without adopting a properly individualist perspective, if one acknowledges that their uniqueness is not simply a function of some interior quality which is irreducible to them, or of their place in an order of differences and relations which is defined by the existence of some transcendent ordering principle (as prescribed by Leviathan logic), but is rather a consequence of the fact that each person constitutes (and is constituted by) a unique intersection within

an infinitely complex and perpetually mobile set of relations. The value of this formulation for our purposes here is that it assists greatly in the development of an idea of collectivity which is not predicated upon any kind of individualism or meta-individualism. The multitude is a creative collectivity capable of exercising political agency; but it is neither composed of individuals nor itself constitutes a meta-individual. It is rather a potentially infinite network of singularities.

We can see then, that 'multitude' is a very useful concept from the perspective developed in this and the previous chapters. However, it is also one which leaves open a number of serious questions, at distinct levels of abstraction. Firstly: is there any empirical reason for thinking that we need such a concept at all? Are there social, cultural or political phenomena which demand a concept like 'multitude' to explain them or describe them theoretically? Secondly: what are the actual mechanics by which the multitude is constituted, or constitutes itself? We know that they are not those of Leviathan logic. Hardt and Negri have insisted that they are not even those of hegemony, to the extent that the latter, as they understand it, necessarily implies a crucial role for leaders and a uniform orientation of the activity of the collective. But that doesn't tell us what they are. To bring us back to the terms we established earlier, the question remains: what do horizontal social relations actually look like, and how are they constituted, if not through the mechanics of group formation described by Freud, Le Bon and Hobbes? This will be discussed in the chapters which follow.

5

The Non-Fascist Crowd: Individuation and Infinite Relationality

Radical Crowds

As discussed in previous chapters, the Western philosophical imaginary has been haunted by the image of the mob since the days of Plato. The assumption that the crowd is the most basic expression of sociality as such, and that certain kinds of typical crowd behaviour can be understood as exemplifying the mechanics of group formation, is a critical one for this tradition, even if it is not always acknowledged as such. It follows then, that if crowds could be shown at least sometimes to exhibit other forms of behaviour, then there would be an empirical reason for questioning the adequacy of these assumptions.[1]

In the early 1960s – just as Tronti was reversing his Marxian perspective, MacPherson was writing his genealogy of possessive individualism, Althusser was trying to exorcise Hegel from Marxism, and the New Lefts were emerging in the United States and the United Kingdom – two major works were published which challenged these assumptions about crowd behaviour. Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power* (1962) is an extraordinary study which simply explodes the Le Bon model of social psychology – never denying that the forms of crowd behaviour described by Le Bon actually occur, but investigating a far wider range of such behaviours and types of crowd, from religious rites to hunting bands to political protests to orchestras. On the basis of this evidence, Canetti's basic ontology of the crowd effectively reverses the

assumptions of Leviathan logic, asserting that it is not the relationship to the leader that defines the membership of the crowd, but the sense of *equality with each other*. George Rudé's study of *The Crowd in History* (1964) looks at the role of riots in English and French political history, from the 1730s to the 1840s. Although he sees them as having very often not been successful in furthering their medium-term political aims, Rudé does point out the short- and long-term gains to which they contributed and, most importantly, demonstrates that even violent crowd behaviour cannot always be understood simply as irrational and disorganised.

Canetti's description of the crowd as tendentially spontaneous and self-organised certainly resonates with some important experiences of my own. In particular I would like to relate the story of a brief episode from my teens which has coloured my assumptions about these issues ever since. Of course, a book like this can never rely on anecdote as evidence for any claim; and yet, where the claim being made is simply for the *possibility* of exceptions to an imagined rule, almost any piece of evidence can stand. Margaret Meade argued that anthropologists only have to find one example of a practice which differs from a 'norm' in order to show that that norm is not a universal human constant of human culture, and so could, in principle, be deliberately varied within any given culture (Mead 1975); along the same lines, I would argue that the following incident demonstrates that it is at least possible for crowds to behave differently from the way that Le Bon describes them.

An Anti-Fascist Crowd

Sometime around 1988 I was hanging out with friends on Bold Street, a popular shopping street in Liverpool. This was only a short time after Liverpool's city council, led by an openly Trotskyist faction, had engaged in a direct confrontation with the Thatcher government over its refusal to implement budget cuts, and a (historically anomalous) sense of Liverpool as a radical metropolis still pervaded the culture of the city. It was a normal sight to see various factions of the far left selling their newspapers in the streets: even the local anarcho-syndicalists produced a regular publication that could be bought from the radical bookshops which traded openly just a block or two away from the town centre. My friends and I had just come out of a record store when we

noticed a group of about six men who had paused in the middle of the street and begun to take bundles of newspapers out of their bags. We paused, curious as to which particular group this might be, especially as we had already noticed most of the familiar ones selling on their usual pitches, nearer to the railway station.

As we realised what the title, symbols and slogans on the papers actually said, we froze, staring, silent. We did not speak to each other at all, any more than did the circle of others, of all ages, which seemed to have crystallised spontaneously from the atomised mass of the Saturday shoppers, and now surrounded the newspaper sellers. These were no leftists. These were representatives of the British National Party, a fascist organisation which was then still in its relative infancy.

There was no violence, not even any great expression of anger. I remember feeling no particular rage or even excitement: just a calm certainty that there was no way these fascists were going to sell their paper on that street that day, and that I would be standing there for as long as it took to stop them. Two individuals from the circle spoke out: a middle-aged man in a postman's coat and an elderly woman in a headscarf. She was animated: 'My husband fought in the war to stop the likes of you!' He barely raised his voice; all I remember is an authoritative finger stabbing the air and the instruction to 'Go now!' being directed at the newspaper sellers. Shouts of encouragement came from the rest of us: we must have been at least 30 by now. For a moment the fascists look terrified. Then they quietly packed their papers away and left. The crowd jeered and cheered briefly, then dispersed.

This story in itself proves nothing, of course: nothing except that crowds *can* be more or less spontaneous, egalitarian, self-organised, rational and goal-oriented. But if such a possibility is to be allowed, then any theory of collectivity, and of democracy, must take it into account, or itself risk becoming an obstacle to the realisation of democratic possibilities. Any such theory adequate to the task would have to take account of certain properties of that temporary group which I have just described. It would have to take account of the fact that the group seemed to form more or less spontaneously, that it acted calmly but intuitively, and that it acted without leadership. Granted, it formed itself on the basis of what Laclau would call a 'constitutive outside' (the fascists); but other than that it did not seem to obey the rules of group formation laid down by Le Bon and his followers. Instead, the logic

of 'contagion' – of emotional contact and imitation spreading laterally between members of a group, which Le Bon and Freud understand to be a basically pathological phenomenon, and a symptom of a loss of individual control amongst group members (Blackman 2012: 26–53) – seemed to operate in such a way as to lend coherence and strength of purpose to the group. Can we develop an understanding of group formation that allows for such a possibility?

Mimetic Identification

One resource available to us in the development of such a theory is the work of the French philosopher Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, already mentioned in Chapter 3. Borch-Jacobsen is a controversial figure who has spent much of his career arguing against the historical validity of many of Freud's therapeutic claims and the theory he based on them. It is Borch-Jacobsen's earliest theoretical work (1992, 1993) which is of particular interest here, however. In an intricate and highly convincing reading of Freud's key writings, Borch-Jacobsen tracks an issue that is of direct relevance to our concerns in this book (1992). We have already seen how Freud reproduces Leviathan logic in his account of group formation, and have remarked the extent to which he does not seem to acknowledge the possibility of lateral, 'horizontal' bonds forming between group members, prior to or independently of a singular bond with the leader. Borch-Jacobsen develops just such a reading of Freud, but goes somewhat further, arguing that Freud does not simply ignore or dismiss such a possibility, but is forced to distort his entire theoretical and clinical framework in the attempt to do so. Crucial to this process in Borch-Jacobsen's account is Freud's insistence on differentiating psychoanalysis from any form of hypnotherapy. This differentiation is necessary to the extent that Freud shares Le Bon's view that *suggestion* – the process by which ideas and feelings about the world are transmitted from one subject to another in a group, especially a crowd – must be seen as an essentially pathological process which is completely distinguishable from the normal mechanisms of identification and subject formation. Borch-Jacobsen's contention is that psychoanalysis has never satisfactorily established the distinction between its own practices and forms of hypnotherapy, that the psychoanalytic 'transference', within which analysands comes to project

their symptoms onto an imagined relationship with the analyst (most conventionally this involves analysands believing themselves to be in love with the analyst) is essentially a form of hypnotic state, and that psychoanalytic 'cures' are probably the result of suggestion rather than of the analyst actually discovering the 'true' cause of the symptoms.[2] According to Borch-Jacobsen, it is in order to defend against this charge that Freud is forced to relegate 'suggestion' to a marginal status in his model of subject formation, even while it remains crucial to the model of group formation.

Borch-Jacobsen's argument becomes particularly interesting for us when he argues that suggestion should be understood as an inherently *mimetic* process which involves a more porous, lateral relationship between subjects than that involved in relationships of 'identification' as described by Freud. Borch-Jacobsen uses this idea to question Freud's understanding of the genesis of desire and the formation of the personality, borrowing from the ideas of the philosopher René Girard. Girard famously argues – on the basis of substantial anthropological evidence – for his concepts of 'mimetic desire' and 'mimetic rivalry' (Girard 1996). These ideas are devastating in their simplicity: they imply merely that people learn to desire what their role models seem to desire, and tend to form rivalrous relationships with those role models or with others sharing the same role models to the extent that they seem to desire the same objects. This does not sound particularly controversial, until we reflect on the extent to which it is a formula which, as Girard himself showed, ultimately obviates the need for Freud's entire Oedipal schema, the theory of identification which informs it, and the Freudian topology of the personality which we outlined in Chapter 3. In particular, it obviates the need for any conceptual or temporal separation between the cathexis on the parent-as-love object and the identification with the parent-as-role-model. Freud argues that the former is prior to the latter, whereas Girard shows how they can easily be understood as elements of a single dynamic: the child imitates a parent, normally the one who seems physically already most similar to them, and in the process learns to desire the parent which the first parent seems to desire, or other people who resemble them physically. This is not to say that this process will not, as Freud assumes, generate feelings of guilt and ambivalence – even the split between conscious and unconscious (insofar as these feelings become consciously

intolerable); but it is to suggest that Freud's model is overcomplicated and that, as Borch-Jacobsen argues, its overcomplication is motivated by a specific unwillingness to understand the relationships into which the child is born, and which constitute its personality, as, from the beginning, *social* relationships rather than merely *psychic* relationships.

In fact, we might say here that Freud's gesture is the beginning of the long history of attempts to differentiate psychoanalysis from sociology – an attempt which must always be predicated on the positing of essentially asocial subjects, who only enters into 'social relations' once their personalities have been formed by the supposedly pre-social processes of cathexis and identification. In his classical model, Freud must insist that the male child's first relationship is one of intimate cathexis on his mother, and that other relationships are formed only on the basis of this one, and in relation to it, in order to bracket out the wider world of social relationships – of which the relationship with the father is the first model – from this imagined originary scene. It is this model which Borch-Jacobsen's argument problematises, instead positing all of the relationships into which the child is born as being characterised by a social and mimetic dimension.

Going further, Borch-Jacobsen is clear that the type of 'mimetic' relation between subjects which Freud's account forecloses is precisely the type of horizontal relationship which I have argued cannot be countenanced by Leviathan logic. Mimetic relationships are not necessarily one way; there is always the risk of either party influencing the other, their subjectivity becoming subtly transformed through contact with the other. For a good everyday illustration of mimetic relationships, consider the ways in which accents, vernacular terms, body language, and so on are transferred between persons. The psychoanalytic claim will always be that such imitations are symptomatic of relations of desire or identification: we pick up mannerisms from those whom we adopt as partial ego ideals or objects of desire. But what if the truth is the reverse, that our desires and identifications emerge *from* a more 'lateral' and molecular process according to which proximate bodies tend to begin to resemble each other as a primary expression of their inherent sociality?[3] The picture of the subject which emerges here is not that of the fundamentally self-contained or preconstituted atom of individualist theory, but rather the subject as a shifting point in a complex and mobile set of

relationships, relationships which constitute the subject rather than merely defining its relationships to other preconstituted subjects.[4] Indeed, it might be more accurate to say that the picture which emerges is that of a self which cannot be properly understood in the classical sense as a 'subject' (a rational, intentional, self-sufficient entity). In the conclusion to his essay on 'the emotional tie'[5] Borch-Jacobsen suggest that Freud 'passed off as an essential law what is only a teleological, ethical and political prescription, perhaps the oldest and most indestructible one: "Be a subject"' (Borch-Jacobsen 1992: 14). In other words, Freud stands accused of insistently reproducing the individualist model of selfhood, even while so many of his findings would properly seem to undermine it.

Borch-Jacobsen's account is convincing so far as it goes, although it ultimately leaves open the question of why so many people have found Freud so convincing for so long. His meticulous deconstruction of Freud's arguments and logical lacunae, impressive as it is, only leaves the reader wondering why psychoanalysis seems to retain so much explanatory power, at least outside of the clinical setting. Isn't it true that small children *do* normally seem to have an intense, almost obsessive relationship with their mothers which seems quite different from, and to be discernible much earlier than, their playful, imitative relationships with their fathers? Isn't it true that, as mentioned in Chapter 3, Freud's account of group psychology gives us the only viable explanation we have of the kind of madness that can grip a people when they follow a Hitler or a Pol Pot? Why do psychoanalytic readings of films, television shows and other cultural phenomena so often seem to be persuasive (Donald 1991)?

Molecular Sociality

Two theorists who offer an answer of sorts to this question are Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In their first collaborative work, *Anti-Oedipus*, they offer a complex account of the historical emergence of 'Oedipal' culture, arguing that although Freud and his followers are certainly vulnerable to all of the criticisms made by Borch-Jacobsen and others, it nonetheless remains the case that 'psychoanalysts invent nothing' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 121). According to Deleuze and Guattari, Freud is not wrong to understand modern subjectivity as

formed in the manner he describes any more than it would be wrong to say that groups are sometimes formed in the manner he describes. Rather, they think that his mistake is to understand a particular set of psychic processes as ubiquitous and universal, rather than seeing them as only one amongst many other such sets, the typicality of which is the specific symptoms of modern capitalism, and the residue of its history and prehistory. For Deleuze and Guattari, the interaction between the demands of capitalism, the patterns of the patriarchal family and the historical development of Western 'civilisation' produces a situation which makes it highly likely that people will indeed come to experience themselves as alienated individuals whose personalities are structured according to Oedipal principles. For example (although this is my own extrapolation – Deleuze and Guattari themselves are never quite so literal), the convention of rearing small children in the 'nuclear' family, with the newborn infant having almost no contact with anyone but the primary carer (usually the mother) for much of the waking day, is almost bound to produce a very intense relationship between child and primary carer, compared to which all other social bonds may seem weak and inferior; but this convention is by no means historically normative for human beings, most of whom, throughout the history of the species, have been raised in tribal groups which would have exposed them from birth to a range of dynamic relationships with others of various ages.[6] From this perspective, both Freud and Borch-Jacobsen might be right. It may be that, as Borch-Jacobsen seems to suggest, the self emerges from a complex matrix of relations and cannot be presumed necessarily to take the form of an individualised 'subject' at all, and certainly not an Oedipal subject as described by Freud; and yet it may also be that in 'Oedipal' cultures, selfhood will in fact normally be experienced in primarily Freudian terms.

This matrix of relations from which the self emerges would be the domain of what Deleuze and Guattari call 'the molecular', of the complex micro-relations which constitute all apparently stable objects (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, Buchanan and Thoburn 2008). Deleuze and Guattari furnish us with a vast array of terminology and observations with which to approach many of our key questions in this book. For example, recall my little anecdote about the anti-fascist crowd. One way of understanding the identity of such a crowd – which is certainly, in Negri's term, an expression of the multitude – would

be to call it a 'subject group' as defined by Deleuze and Guattari, and explicitly distinguished by them from the 'subjugated groups' which are precisely those groups described as typical by Hobbes, Le Bon and Freud. For Deleuze and Guattari, the subject group is defined by 'transversal' relations (Guattari 1974) which do not work to delimit or negate the inherent 'multiplicity' (Deleuze 1994) of the elements which they relate. Deleuze and Guattari arguably go further than anyone in developing a model, not just of self-formation, but of experience in general, which consciously resists all individualist imperatives. For example, their wide-ranging distinction between the 'molecular' and the 'molar' serves as a tool with which specifically to deconstruct any form of meta-individualism, to the extent that all stable, coherent, internally hierarchical 'molar' formations are shown to be themselves, on another level of analysis, the products of dynamic, complex and transversal 'molecular' relations (just as solid objects can be shown to be composed of atomic and subatomic elements which, at their own scale, are widely dispersed and almost always highly mobile). This is not the place to attempt a full exposition of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical schema, however. Instead I would like to consider further a proposition which seems to have emerged logically from our discussion thus far and that warrants some further investigation: the proposition that the self can be understood as emerging from a general field or matrix of relations which always precedes it.

Gilbert Simondon: Relationality and Individuation

This is an idea which is associated with the work of Gilbert Simondon, a French thinker who is still relatively unknown in the English-speaking world, but whose work has exerted a considerable influence on that of Deleuze and Guattari as well as on the contemporary philosopher Bernard Stiegler (1998), and important post-Deleuzian thinkers such as Brian Massumi (2002) and Erin Manning (2009, 2013). Simondon was a philosopher who produced his most important work during a very short publishing career, between 1958 and 1964, in major studies of the concepts of the 'technical object' and of 'individuation' respectively (2012, 2005). It is the latter which particularly interests us here.[7]

From the perspective we are developing here, Simondon is arguably the most rigorous and important anti-individualist philosopher, because the question which he tries to answer is precisely that which any non-individualist mode of thought must address: how is it that individuality occurs at all? This might sound like a paradox, but it is not intended as such. We have encountered some very strong arguments against individualist and meta-individualist thinking in every context and on every scale. But a rejection of such thinking surely raises the question of how we recognise the existence of distinct entities – personal, social, or political – at all. This is the question to which Simondon tries to offer an answer.

For Simondon, there is no such thing as the individual as such: there are in fact only various events and processes of 'individuation', which are never fully complete. A person, a rock formation, a tree, a cellular organism: all of these would constitute different moments and effects of 'individuation'. Naturally, such individuations never come from nowhere: they always occur in the context of a field of relations which necessarily pre-exists the event of individuation. It is this field of relations which Simondon calls 'the preindividual'. What is crucial to understand about the preindividual is that it is not simply an aggregation of elements but primarily a set of relations. In fact, the preindividual is best conceived of as a field of relations – or perhaps, a field of *relationality* – which precedes any actual positive terms. If this sounds almost impossibly abstract, consider the example of a child, who is not born alone, but into a set of pre-existing social relationships (see Chapter 2). Isn't it the case that what really defines each child's place in the world and will come to shape the person they become is not primarily the actual individual facticity of each parent, relative, friend, teacher, and so on, but rather the complex of relations between them? As well as the 'preindividual' field, Simondon understands individuation as always also occurring within a 'transindividual' field, which is to say a field of relations between those preindividual elements which remain a part of every individuated being and which never become fully individuated (2005: 295–6).

One of the hallmarks of Simondon's writing, which was to have a direct influence on Deleuze and Guattari, was his use of terminology derived from cybernetics and from the natural sciences. One of his primary examples of individuation in nature, which seems in some

sense to be his basic model of individuation in general, is the process of crystallisation in a solution. The crystal is clearly a specific object with a particular structure, the outcome of predictable processes, but its exact form is always distinctive – and yet it is never an entirely distinct substance from its solution, substrate or constituent elements. Crystallisation only occurs in a solution that has reached a certain level of supersaturation, which can be understood as an extreme disequilibrium between the solution's constituent elements. This notion of disequilibrium is crucial because it relates to two of Simondon's other key terms: metastability and transduction. 'Metastability' can be understood as a state wherein the system is not at all in a state of equilibrium or rest, but is not in such a state of disequilibrium or disorder as to be no longer describable as a system. In basic physics, transduction is simply the process by which energy is converted from one form into another. For Simondon, individuation occurs when a system undergoes a change of state or, more technically, a phase change (from liquid to gas, for example, which does not involve a change of substance). For Simondon, 'being does not possess a unity of identity, which is that of the stable state in which no transformation is possible; being possesses a *transductive unity:* which is to say that it can go out of phase with itself, can overflow itself in any direction from its centre' (2005: 31).[8]

Simondon's perspective leads him to an understanding of group formation as itself a process of 'collective individuation', writing that

> [e]ntry into the collective should be considered as a supplemental individuation, drawing on a charge of preindividual nature which is carried by living beings. Nothing finally permits the assertion that all of the reality of living beings is incorporated in their constituted individuality; we can consider the being as an ensemble formed from individuated and from preindividual reality: it is preindividual reality which can be considered as the reality which founds transindividuality. Such a reality is by no means a form in which the individual would be like a raw material but a reality extending the individual on either side, like a world into which it is inserted, in being at the same level as all the other beings which make up this world. The entry into the collective is an amplification, in collective form, of the being which consisted of a preindividual reality at the

> same time as an individual reality. This supposes therefore that the individuation of beings does not exhaust completely their potential for individuation, and that there is not only one state of completion of beings. (Simondon 2005: 317).

This is an extremely complex formulation, but its complexity is also its virtue. We are a long way here from Leviathan logic, but we can now shed new light on its conceptual dynamic. That logic can be understood as amounting to just one among a number of possible models of collective individuation, and in the case of Freud it also informs a theory of psychic individuation. What these models of psychic and collective individuation lack is precisely any positive sense of the 'preindividual' or 'transindividual'. It is not, however, especially in the case of Freud, that these dimensions are ignored: rather there are two particular problems with the way in which they are treated. On the one hand, as we have seen, their functioning is treated as entirely dependent upon the singular relationship of each group member to the leader. On the other hand, what Simondon calls the 'preindividual' is relegated by Freud to the domain of the *individual* unconscious (and, in his later work, the 'drives' (Freud 1924)), its inherently social and collective dimension never being properly explored by Freud. In fact this observation – that psychoanalysis cannot grasp the implications of the social nature of the unconscious – is one of the key claims of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*.

How might Simondon's model help us better to understand phenomena such as the anti-fascist crowd from my story? In this particular instance, the model has clear relevance. The crowd in question formed, crystallising from the mass of Saturday shoppers, as an expression of the political potential which was latent in the general collectivity of people present in Liverpool that afternoon, on the basis of a sudden disequilibrium in the system introduced by the presence of the fascists. Its formation was itself a clear experience of 'transindividuality': a set of shared assumptions, sensations, memories and feelings formed the basis of our sense of collective purpose, despite the fact that every one of us would have attributed quite different sets of personal, ethical or political meanings to our actions; and this was no doubt dependent upon the existence and functioning of the general

transindividual milieu within which the idea of Liverpool as a solidly leftist city circulated.

What we have in Simondon then, is an account of individuation which retains a strong sense of the irreducibly preindividual and transindividual dimensions of experience, and which does not start from the assumption that either the individual or the group is ontologically prior, but rather understands the general field of relations and potentialities as having that prior status. I would suggest that this connects usefully with Hardt and Negri's account of the multitude, presenting a strong picture of *sociality as such* as a general condition of creative possibility, which cannot be understood according to any individualist or meta-individualist logic. This is in stark contrast to the individualist tradition, which can understand the social only as an aggregation of individuals or as a uniform condition of meta-individuality, and agency and creativity only as proceeding from the activity of individuals or meta-individuals, but cannot accept sociality as being at once a condition of radical multiplicity and of creative possibility. And I would argue that any strong concept of democracy must be informed by such an understanding of sociality if it is not to degenerate into the too-limited forms of 'democracy' which liberal hegemony permits in the West today, or into the totalitarian meta-individualism of fascism or Stalinism.

Infinite Relationality

As we have already suggested more than once, this radical conception of sociality raises some obvious problems over the nature of agency, collective or individual. Is the singular person capable of acting in any meaningful way, or are they so caught up in networks of interdependence that this is simply impossible? Does 'the group' have any coherent existence at all, if it is not a Leviathan? This is a question addressed in a truly remarkable passage from one of the great political philosophers of the twentieth century, Hannah Arendt.

> Because the actor always moves among and in relation to other acting beings, he is never merely a 'doer' but always and at the same time a sufferer. To do and to suffer are like opposite sides of the same coin, and the story that an act starts is composed of its consequent deeds

> and sufferings. These consequences are boundless, because action, though it may proceed from nowhere, so to speak, acts in a medium where every reaction becomes a chain reaction and where every process is the cause of new processes. Since action acts upon beings who are capable of their own actions, reaction, apart from being a response, is always a new action that strikes out on its own and affects others. Thus action and reaction among men never move in a closed circle and can never be reliably confined to two partners. This boundlessness is characteristic not of political action alone, in the narrower sense of the word, as though the boundlessness of human interrelatedness were only the result of the boundless multitude of people involved, which could be escaped by resigning oneself to action within a limited, graspable framework of circumstances; the smallest act in the most limited circumstances bears the seed of the same boundlessness, because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation … Action, moreover, no matter what its specific content, always establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries. (Arendt, 1958: 190)

This description of 'the human condition' seems wholly compatible with the account that we have been developing here, and can also point us towards a number of other conceptual resources with which to develop it. Arendt posits here what I will call an *infinite relationality* as constituting both the condition of possibility and the inherently limiting factor of all human agency.

This formulation is deliberately reminiscent of one of the most influential philosophical oeuvres of the late twentieth century: the work of Jacques Derrida. Derrida's complex and often obscure work is the subject of numerous commentaries and expositions, and my account of it here will necessarily be truncated and entirely biased by the interests of this study. Keeping this in mind, I would suggest that one useful way of understanding that work is precisely in these terms: Derrida recognises all phenomena – including, but not limited to, meanings, selves and institutions – as constituted by an infinite network of relations. This network of relations, by virtue of its infinity, can never be grasped in its totality, which means, by the same token, that no point in it can ever be understood as entirely stable (Derrida

1978: 278–93). So, for example, many of Derrida's early philosophical interventions proceed from the observation that the Western philosophical tradition is littered with references to the inferiority of written communication to verbal speech, despite the fact that even from its earliest inception, the institution of philosophy depends upon writing and writings (Derrida 1976, 1978). This tradition – from Plato to twentieth century language philosophy – seems to mistrust the slipperiness of writing, the fact that a written text can, by its very nature, be dislocated from the context of its inscription and read anew in another context, without the presence of the original author to verify and guarantee its correct interpretation (Derrida 1988). Of course, the fact that even the most 'immediate' face-to-face communication will run precisely the same dangers (if I tell you something in person, will you really understand it better than if I write it down?), that even a communication with *oneself* might carry the same risk (will I remember exactly what I 'meant' by a given utterance even five seconds into the future?), is something that the tradition does not like to acknowledge at all, precisely because to make that acknowledgement is to admit the inherent complexity and instability of all communicative situations, and even of all selfhood.

Especially in the early days of his reception in the English-speaking world, Derrida was often read as arguing for some kind of relativistic or solipsistic philosophy, according to which there is no such thing as truth or meaning. Nothing could be further from a correct understanding of his position. For it is crucial to understand here that Derrida does not deny for a moment that communication[9] occurs, all the time, and that meaning is successfully shared and conveyed when it does. The point is that for Derrida, the *possibility* of misunderstanding, and indeed the impossibility of a full and complete transmission of one set of meanings into a different experiential context, without those meanings undergoing even the slightest alteration, is exactly what makes every *partial* transmission of meaning possible in the first place. If it were not possible for you to 'misunderstand' this statement, then what would be occurring would not in fact be an act of linguistic communication as we normally understand it, but merely an act of telepathy, signalling or rote repetition. The fact that I am able to construct a sentence here and now that is slightly different from every other sentence ever constructed is entirely necessary to the fact of my

being able to use language to convey ideas at all, rather than simply repeating verbatim things that I have heard elsewhere; and yet that fact necessitates the possibility of communicative failure. At the same time, no such sentence could ever be wholly 'original', but must be made up from parts of the many other sentences which have preceded it: otherwise, its meaning would not be recognisable at all, either to me or to you. From this perspective, what the philosophical tradition hates about writing is the way that it dramatises and makes obvious this complex dimension of human experience.

If it is this quality of writing to which the 'phonologocentric' tradition objects, then it is closely bound up with several others which are also worth thinking about. Firstly, one of the most obvious differences between speech and writing is the apparent materiality of writing. It would be easy to see this as a simple case of the idealist philosophical tradition denigrating the material in favour of the apparent incorporeality of speech. But this would be too simple for two reasons. Firstly, of course, breath and speech, like all sound, *are*, in fact, wholly material phenomena. Secondly, writing is not itself a purely material one: writing only works because we can recognise letters in entirely different media. What is really at stake here, in fact, is not a simple split between the ideal and the material, but the very instability of the distinction between them; and it is this instability which the tradition most abhors. Writing instantiates not only the instability of the division between the ideal and the material, but also the instability of the distinction between presence and absence: I write only because the addressee, and an infinity of potential addressees, are absent, and yet only in order to make myself in some way present to them. At its most abstract, we might say that writing instantiates the inherently distributed nature of being as such. Now, the point I want to add to this, in the light of our citation from Arendt and the discussions which preceded it, including our discussion of Marx, is that if we concede sociality as such to be constituted by just such an infinite network of relations, and as such to be by nature a condition of dynamic contingency, then it is possible to bring these insights of Derrida to bear on many of our conclusions so far. From this perspective, part of what the phonologocentric tradition fears and mistrusts is sociality as such, and what it dislikes about writing in particular is the way in which the written status of philosophy foregrounds the status of

philosophy as a social institution, subject to all of the complexities and uncertainties which Arendt describes. At the same time, we could say that what we learn from Derrida is that sociality as such (and indeed all phenomenal experience) possesses a certain 'graphematic' (writing-like) quality: which, in fact, is more or less precisely what Derrida means by his famous, and widely misunderstood remark that 'there is nothing outside the text' (1976: 158).

From this perspective, sociality can be understood as itself constituted within the horizon of Derrida's *différance* (1982: 3–27). This is a famous neologism combining the words 'deferral' and 'difference' in order to designate the way in which, in a system of relational differences (such as any linguistic system, as conceived by Saussure (2011)), the full identity of any given object or term is never actually present, but it is constantly 'deferred': it is distributed throughout the system and so is never actually fully realised at any point within it. The logic of this position is that we must ultimately try to imagine, just as Simondon also argues, a system of relations or relationality which somehow precedes any actual terms or instantiations.

A provisional conclusion to be drawn here is that what I have called 'meta-individualism' is a mode of thought which long predates early modern liberalism, and is in fact a hallmark of much of 'Western' thought. It might therefore be expected then that Derridean and deconstructive thought would have much to add to reflections on the nature of collectivity. This expectation is most obviously fulfilled in the work of Jean-Luc Nancy, a philosopher very close to Derrida who has explored the implications of a radically relational understanding of self, community, freedom and being in a series of influential works (Nancy 1991, 1993, 2000, 2010, and others), perhaps the most developed of which is his classic essay 'Being Singular Plural', in which he proposes a way of thinking about being as radically and irreducibly relational. Nancy writes: 'Prior to "me" and "you," the "self" is like a "we" that is neither a collective subject nor "intersubjectivity," but rather the immediate mediation of Being in "(it)self," the plural fold of the origin' (2000: 94).

> Being singular plural: in a single stroke, without punctuation, without a mark of equivalence, implication, or sequence. A single, continuous-discontinuous mark tracing out the entirety of the

> ontological domain, being-with-itself designated as the 'with' of Being, of the singular and plural, and dealing a blow to ontology – not only another signification but also another syntax. The 'meaning of Being': not only as the 'meaning of with,' but also, and above all, as the 'with' of meaning. Because none of these three terms precedes or grounds the other, each designates the coessence of the others. This coessence puts essence itself in the hyphenation – 'being-singular-plural' – which is a mark of union and also a mark of division, a mark of sharing that effaces itself, leaving each term to its isolation *and* its being-with-the-others.
>
> From this point forward, then, the unity of an ontology must be sought in this traction, in this drawing out, in this distancing and spacing which is that of Being and, at the same time, that of the singular and the plural, both in the sense that they are distinct from one another and indistinct. In such an ontology, which is not an 'ontology of society' in the sense of a 'regional ontology,' but ontology itself as a 'sociality' or an 'association' more originary than all 'society,' more originary than 'individuality' and every 'essence of Being.' (2000: 37–8).

On the basis of this philosophy, Nancy argues for an understanding of 'democracy' as the political expression of the inherently open-ended character of this condition of 'being-with'.

> 'Democracy' is thus:
> – first of all, the name of a regime of sense whose truth cannot be subsumed under any ordering agency, whether religious, political, scientific or aesthetic; it is, rather, that which wholly engages 'man' as the risk and chance of 'himself', as 'dancer over the abyss', to put it in a paradoxical and deliberately Nietzschean way. (2010: 33)

Nancy is one of the most important contemporary proponents of a philosophy of 'relationality'. This is a very widely used term across a range of discursive fields which often have relatively little connection with each other (Massey 2005). At its most abstract, the concept of relationality merely posits a situation in which the identity of an entity is constituted by its position in a set of relations. Within the intellectual currents that we are most concerned with here, it is an idea derived

primarily from Ferdinand de Saussure's influential theory of language (2011). Saussure broke with earlier theories of language which tried to account for the meanings of words in historical or phenomenological terms (for example, trying to explain *why* the particular phoneme 'bottle' might have become attached to the concept of a narrow-necked glass receptacle), arguing that such accounts are irrelevant to how language actually functions. For Saussure, functional language must be understood as a system with which the identity of each sign is *only* guaranteed by its difference from all other signs: it makes no difference if the word designating the narrow-necked glass receptacle is 'bottle' or 'bouteille' or 'flumpflwig', as long as the word cannot be mistaken for any other. The implicit observation from which thinkers like Derrida have proceeded is that, if this is the case, then meaning as such resides nowhere in the system; or rather, it resides *only* in the totality of the system as a whole. But then what if it is actually impossible to delimit and define such a totality at all?

One idea which links almost every theorist on whom this study draws is their insistence that there can be no absolute and final totality to any such system which would contain and guarantee the identity of all of its elements, because any such system, while it can be thought of conceptually as existing in a static state – 'synchronically' as Saussure puts it – is actually always in a state of constant transformation. Every system is also a process, or set of processes. One way of understanding what is at stake here is to contrast this way of thinking about relationality with the thought of Hegel. Hegel is arguably the first modern philosopher really to address the question of relationality, of the interdependence of phenomena and identities, and of the processual nature of the changing relationships between them, particularly in his great masterwork *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. A classic example from that work is his account of the dialectical relationship between the master and the slave, or 'Lord' and 'bondsman'. Put simply, Hegel argues that the master is dependent for his identity as master upon the slave, who must recognise him as master in order for that status to be sustained. (He goes on to suggest, rather more contentiously, that this makes the bondsman somehow more 'free', because his identity is less dependent upon the relationship than is the master's; but this problematic argument need not concern us here). Hegel understands human culture and its attendant modes of experience as evolving

over time through a 'dialectical' process whereby such oppositional relationships are overcome by new identities which can transcend and include both of their terms, such as the identity of the bondsman who has realised that 'it is precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence that he acquires a mind of his own' (Hegel 1977: 119). The crucial difference between Hegel and our later relational thinkers is that he seems to posit this process as tending towards a final goal of 'Absolute Knowing', which appears to be indissociable from man's final salvation in Christ. In other words, the system of relations *is* ultimately a finite totality whose identity is guaranteed by the authority of God. As such, the lesson of the *Phenomenology* seems to be that the only way to stabilise the otherwise endless play of *différance* is to introduce the ultimate *deus ex machina*, in a definitively arbitrary fashion.

Democracy and Relationality

In fact, arguably the only real difference between all of our key sources in this study, and between them and Hegel himself, is exactly what significance they attribute to this arbitrary gesture by which the infinite relationality of the social is contained, stabilised and made meaningful. But what is fascinating here is that, in each case, their approach to this question precisely determines their understanding of democracy and its limitation. For Hegel the totalising gesture is not arbitrary at all, but an expression of the reality of God; and Hegel is not interested in democracy (1967). For thinkers heavily indebted to Lacan, who was himself deeply influenced by Hegel (Lacan 2006), it is necessary to accept the need for such arbitrary moments of stabilisation, even while acknowledging that they are ultimately arbitrary. This is essentially Laclau and Mouffe's position, and much of their work is dedicated to exploring its implications for a radical democratic politics. For them, this stabilisation is precisely the work of hegemony, and it will always depend upon a relatively arbitrary mechanism whereby one particularity is elevated to the symbolic status of the universal, this one element coming to represent the general systematicity of the system (such as when nationality or class becomes the singular basis upon which the unity of a collectivity is defined) (Laclau 1994, 1996). As we have seen, what makes a situation democratic from this perspective

is the fact that the very arbitrariness of this process is acknowledged, institutionalised and rendered transparently impermanent.

Deleuze and Guattari never say anything that would contradict this formulation, but stress the need to be very wary of all 'molar aggregates' (1983: 181).[10] Their position on this issue is really very similar to Laclau and Mouffe's, despite the differences in their vocabularies. While Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge that molar aggregation is necessary under conditions of political struggle (1988: 276), they warn against any permanent stabilisation of such molarity at the expense of the molecular, experimental 'emission of particles' (1988: 279). Mouffe also precisely states that what defines the truly democratic polity is the fact that it is *perpetually* contested, that any stabilisation of its system is only ever temporary. It is important to note here that Deleuze and Guattari's own references to 'democracy' are almost entirely denigratory; but, as several commentators have noted, these references seem to be specifically to those forms of representative democracy which we have argued to be already redundant today (Patton 2000, Mengue 2003, Gilbert 2010). Deleuze and Guattari's apparent objections to 'democracies' as always involving the imposition of molar identities and the constitution of oppressive 'majorities' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 108) can, if their own radical anti-individualism is ignored, easily be mistaken for a de Tocqueville-style liberalism. Taking their anti-individualism into account, however, Deleuze and Guattari's 'minoritarian' critique of democracy and their account of the relationship between the molar and the molecular become powerful conceptual resources with which to refine the analysis of post-democracy. Post-democracy is precisely characterised by the inability of temporary molarities to form and reach the necessary level of intensity in order to achieve political breakthroughs: instead, oppositional movements continually rise and fall, undergoing molecular deterritorialisation before they reach the point at which they could initiate some real phase change in the social system into which they try to intervene: in the absence of such phase changes, almost every 'minor' becoming is captured and reterritorialised by the logic of neoliberal commodification. The task of radical democratic struggle is to engender processes both of temporary molar aggregation amongst oppositional forces and of intense deterritoriali-

sation by their molecular components that can destabilise and evade these processes respectively.

Democracy to Come: The Ethics and Politics of Openness

Derrida approaches democracy in a characteristic style, with his well-known evocation of 'democracy to come' as the impossible-yet-necessary horizon of a good politics (1994: 65). This formulation depends for its full effectiveness on the frequent usage of the French word *avenir* (a compound meaning literally 'to-come') where English would use 'future'; for what defines a democratic politics for Derrida is precisely a certain openness to the possibilities of the future, unencumbered by any religious or political teleology. This is clearly very close to Nancy's understanding and is wholly compatible with Deleuze, Guattari, Laclau and Mouffe. Now, it is very easy to hear Derrida's invocation of 'democracy to come' and 'openness to the future' as being simply a banal and wholly abstract call for society to keep some sort of open mind about things and generally hope for the best. This would be a mistake. The idea that democratic politics is by nature experimental and must always be open to the possibility of new practices, new ideas, and new forms of contestation might sound tediously obvious, but I would argue that it is precisely the failure since the 1970s of political elites in particular to maintain such an attitude that has been one of the defining characteristics and conditions of possibility of neoliberal post-democracy. A key functional element of the post-democratic assemblage is a crippling complacency about existing democratic procedures and institutions. It is crucial to observe here that there can be no blueprint for a 'radical democratic' society, no single set of prescriptions or institutional formulas. Rather, the key move which would break the post-democratic impasse would be a collective acceptance of the severity of our democratic crisis and a willingness to recognise the necessity of exploring novel solutions to it. This is the direct implication of Derrida's evocation of 'democracy to come'.

Derrida first uses the phrase in his seminal study of Marx (Derrida 1994), and it is an idea partly influenced by his interest in Walter Benjamin's discussion of 'messianic' time: an extraordinarily cryptic notion which gestures towards a wholly non-linear conception of time

and an idea of the disruptive, revolutionary or 'messianic' event as always potentially immanent to the present (Benjamin 1970: 254–5). This idea derives in part from Benjamin's interest in Jewish mysticism, an interest which he arguably shares with another of Derrida's key influences, the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. Although Levinas always claimed that his Judaism had no bearing upon his ethical philosophy, which is Derrida's main point of reference in his work, what Derrida derives from his work, as from Benjamin's, is certainly something like a quasi-religious ethics. Levinas is a key figure in the history of relational thinking, and in the deliberate attempt to detach it from any project of dialectical totalisation. He famously proposes 'ethics' as 'first philosophy' (Levinas 1969), the starting point for all further philosophising, and is primarily concerned with the question of how to define the ethical relation. For Levinas, this 'relation without relation' (1969: 80) is characterised by a full recognition of the alterity of the other. We appreciate not only that the other is not like us, but that their difference from us is incalculable and in some sense incomprehensible. To an extent, Levinas's ethics can be understood as an elaboration of Kant's basic ethical injunction to treat other people as ends in themselves and never as means to ends (Kant 1991); but Levinas goes much further. He wants to get away from any mode of thought which would ultimately reduce the alterity of the other by understanding them as an element in a wider system, because any such system must in some sense domesticate and reduce the singularity of all of its constituent elements. One of the crucial implications here is that ethical relations can never be understood in reciprocal terms: my ethical responsibility to you is by no means a function of our common memberships of some economy of exchange and mutual responsibility, but is an effect of that radical alterity which we experience in the true 'face-to-face' relationships. To conceptualise it thus is to reduce it to a transaction, and so to render it as something much less than a truly ethical relationship; and the dignity of ethics demands that it cannot be reduced to any kind of calculation. If we consider the importance of transactional thinking to the liberal tradition, in both its 'social-contract' and neoliberal variants, as discussed in Chapter 2, then the radicalism of this proposition becomes apparent.

The implications for our argument here of Levinas's thought are a matter for some interpretation. Simon Critchley directly criticises Nancy's notion of 'being-with' on Levinasian grounds:

> Nancy's model of being-with might be said to produce the desired political virtue of solidarity. Yet my view is that unless solidarity is underpinned by the separation, distance and radical non-solidarity of the ethical relation to the other ... then it will ineluctably lead back to an ontological tradition that has shown itself incapable of acknowledging that which resists knowledge, i.e. the source of ethical experience – what Levinas identifies as the other ... what Derrida calls justice ... The face-to-face risks effacing itself in the reciprocity of the 'with'; it is therefore a matter – ontologically, ethically, politically – not of thinking without the 'with', but of thinking the 'without' within this 'with'. (Critchley 1999: 251–2)

This is an interesting interpretation, which is very close to some of Derrida's most Levinasian moments, when his reflections on the nature of secrecy or solitude seem to propose a rather lonely model of the singular subject, whose individuation from the infinite field of *différance* is achieved only through the opening or recognition of a radical gap from it and therefore from all others (Derrida 2011, 2008). And yet it is also a very problematic interpretation, assuming as it does that Nancy's 'being-with' can be understood as a relation of reciprocity. I would suggest that this reading is problematic to the extent that 'reciprocity' is a concept which already implies the existence of two constituted subjects, two individuated beings, who enter into some kind of subsequent exchange; as such, it misses the more important point that their mutually constituting relation (in fact their multiple relations, and their relations to every other element of existence) precedes any actual individuation of either of the 'related' terms (or subjects). What we have here is a difference between two contrasting models of sociality and subjectivity. On the one hand, the Levinasian model as classically understood seems to propose the existence of a singular subject who is existentially defined by their relationship to an unknowable other. On the other hand we have the model which we have been developing thus far in this book, of a general field of infinite relationality, of relations preceding any actualised terms, into and from which every subject emerges as only a partially individuated being. Whether or not these two are wholly incompatible, and whether the latter is a model which could actually be derived from Levinas, are open questions.

It is easy enough to see, as Critchley explains here, why the answer would be 'no'. There are some aspects of Levinas's thought which suggest otherwise, however. One intriguing aspect of his writing, at least for readers who have first approached his ideas through English translation, is that where in English Levinas is translated as referring to the relation to 'the Other', the French word which is often being translated is actually *Autrui*, which would not normally be translated as 'other' but as 'others'.[11] Levinas does frequently refer to the relationship with *l'autre* – the other – but more often, where he is translated in this way, he is actually discussing the relation to *others*. The point here is that Levinas is by no means always talking about a single 'I–thou' relationship, which is how his earliest Anglophone readers seem to have interpreted him; he is often talking about some kind of relationship to a plurality of others in general. A second point to note here is that Critchley identifies his Levinasian position closely with a Lacanian model of the subject (Critchley 1999: 198–208), and that the model he develops is very close to Laclau's Lacanian understanding of subjectivity as a condition of 'failed wholeness'. In either case, subjectivity as such is defined by a certain constitutive gap, a radical incompletion which is the condition of possibility of, for Critchley, the ethical relation to the other and, for Laclau, the entry of the subject into a political community. What I think is crucial here is that the language used by all of these writers is one which understands this opening to the other in negative terms, derived from Lacan's positing of the 'lack' which constitutes desire which constitutes the subject. The subtle but important difference with Deleuze and Guattari's model is that for them, this gap is only experienced as a lack under the specific historical conditions of 'Oedipal' capitalism; under others, it might be understood as an opening which would be experienced in wholly positive terms, as an *enhancement* of the subject by virtue of the fact that this very opening augments that subject's capacity to form productive relations with other bodies. And this is a view which might take some support from Levinas when he writes that

> signification does not arise because the same [i.e. the subject] has needs, because he lacks something, and hence all that is susceptible of filling this lack takes on meaning. Signification is in the absolute

surplus of the other with respect to the same who desires him, who desires what he does not lack. (Levinas 1969: 97)

In fact, Critchley's own more recent work seems to have moved towards a reading of Levinas which would be much more compatible with this position, embracing what Critchley describes explicitly as an 'anarchist' politics. Although I would not describe the position set out in the present work as 'anarchist', it clearly shares some affinities with the anarchist desire to abolish all hierarchy, and the account of democracy which Critchley derives from Levinas is entirely in tune with this book's argument. For Critchley, radical politics 'is a question of trying to conceive of forms of political gathering, coalition or association, that is to say, contingent political articulations in relation to a more wild and formless conception of social being' (2007: 118–19).

> In my view, what has to be continually criticized in political thinking is the aspiration to a full incarnation of the universal in the particular, or the privileging of a specific particularity because it is believed to incarnate the universal: for example, the classical Hegelian idea of the state, the modish and vague idea of a European super-state, or the fantasy of the world-state. By contrast, democracy as democratization is the movement of disincarnation that challenges the borders and questions the legitimacy of the state. Democratization is a dissensual praxis that works against the consensual horizon of the state. Democratization is here conceived as a dual sequence of both micro-political articulations, movements and blocs at the level of civil society, and as a sequence of macro-political, trans-national articulations. Good examples of such dual-sequencing would be the politics of indigenous rights and women's rights … and the forms of direct action that took place in Seattle and elsewhere … [T]he final claim I would like to make is that democratization is action based on an ethical demand. That is to say, political action does not flow from the cunning of reason, from some materialist or idealist philosophy of history or indeed from some more or less secularized eschatology. Rather, it feeds from what I will now describe as a *meta-political* moment.
>
> In my view, at the heart of a radical politics there has to be a meta-political ethical moment. As we have seen, this is the ethical

> experience of infinite responsibility at the heart of subjectivity, a moment of what I called *hetero-affectivity* prior to any auto-affection and disturbing any simple claim to autonomy. (Critchley 2007: 119)

Before, Across and Beyond Any National Determination

We will return to Critchley's concept of hetero-affectivity in later chapters. For now, whether or not we can make Levinas's position, or Critchley's, or all aspects of Derrida's, wholly compatible with the version of radical anti-individualism which I am trying to develop here, I would suggest that this model can draw something very useful from the Levinasian assertion of infinite responsibility to the unknowable other, and from Derrida's and Critchley's elaborations of it – something which helps to elaborate the political and ethical implications of a thinking of infinite relationality. For Derrida, one of the key consequences of the Levinasian position is to challenge ordinary thinking about the nature of a given national community's responsibilities to its 'others': foreigners, immigrants, refugees (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000). It is worth reminding ourselves here that the Hobbesian–Freudian model of collectivity has always been grounded in a particular conception of how *national* institutions function, while Derrida has suggested that the very idea of community in the West is always tied to an image of the collective as bound by a particular place or limited to a homogeneous ethnic or kinship group. Hardt and Negri are very clear that one of their key aims in positing the concept 'multitude' is to get away from the idea that the only possible form of active collectivity is the nation or the family (Hardt and Negri 2000: 93–109, 148). Derrida has at various points in his writings tried to gesture towards a thinking of sociality and democracy which would be non-national, not inter-national, but 'international before, across and beyond any national determination' (Derrida 1994: 85). Such a notion of the international or non-national is clearly demanded by the idea of infinite relationality which we have been developing here, simply because the latter would imply that the complex and indeterminate relations between human subjects – or, as we shall see, between human and non-human agents – could not possibly be understood as limited in any way by national or other borders. The implication is quite clear: a recognition of infinite relationality must entail a radical

cosmopolitanism, a postmodern internationalism based on a complex understanding of sociality which goes beyond the limitations of any notion of national community.

This in turn implies a radical understanding of collectivity which would replace any nationalist or communitarian emphasis on the common features shared by members of a community with an emphasis on the interdependence which is entailed by a recognition of the full and non-limitable relationality of worldly existence. At the same time, what is being proposed here is not any kind of 'humanism' – not even Paul Gilroy's 'planetary humanism' (Gilroy 2000). It is not my 'common humanity' which puts me into relation with the Chinese factory worker, but the simple fact that the relationships between us (as people who are both affected by climate change, as the producer and the wearer of a pair of shoes, as members of the global proletariat, as relatives of a distant cousin in Toronto, as fans of US soul music, as readers of Lao-Tzu and Marx …) can be assumed to exist and yet can never be exhaustively known and catalogued.

Like Hardt and Negri, Derrida notices that the other predominant way of imagining collectivity in the Western imagination alongside 'the nation', and often intertwined with it, is the figure of the patriarchal family or the 'fraternal' relations between brothers – figures which are both ethnocentric and phallocentric at the same time.

> Is it possible to think and to implement democracy, that which would keep the old name 'democracy', while uprooting from it all these figures of friendship (philosophical and religious) which prescribe fraternity: the family and the androcentric ethnic group? Is it possible, in assuming a certain faithful memory of democratic reason and reason *tout court* – I would even say, the Enlightenment … not to found, where it is no longer a matter of *founding*, but to open out to the future, or rather, to the 'come' of a certain democracy?
>
> For democracy remains to come; this is its essence insofar as it remains: not only will it remain indefinitely perfectible, hence always insufficient and future, but, belonging to the future time of the promise, it will always remain, in each of its future times, to come: even when there is democracy it is never present, it remains the theme of a non-presentable concept. Is it possible to open up to

> the 'come' of a certain democracy which is no longer an insult to the friendship we have striven to think beyond the homo-fraternal and phallogocentric schema? (Derrida 1997: 306)

Derrida draws our attention here to the mutual imbrication of nationalist, ethnocentric and patriarchal discourses of collectivity, while also gesturing towards the possibility of a different way of thinking about the collective and democracy. This is an important reminder that the deconstruction of essentialist conceptions of gender, race and sexuality need not lead – as it sometimes does – into a naive endorsement of banal individualism. Derrida's thought has been critically important in recent years for several strands of feminist, queer and postcolonial theory all of which have in common the 'anti-essentialist' rejection of any notion of personal identity as inhering in the subject, or any notion of a homogeneous identitarian community, as well as an emphasis on the radical multiplicity and relationality of all identities (Butler 1993, Bhabha 1994, Ahmed 2006, Spivak 2006, Venn 2006, Puar 2007). The major contributions to this work have all been motivated by political and intellectual impulses with which this book is entirely in sympathy, trying to steer a clear course between two poles. On the one hand, they have tried most obviously to resist what I have called the 'meta-individualist' postulate that would see collectivities or communities of any kind as defined by their essential homogeneity. On the other hand, read carefully, the work of post-structuralist thinkers such as Butler, Bhabha and Spivak is always directed against any individualist conception of the self, always stressing the partial, 'hybrid', fragmentary and inherently multiple aspects of selfhood. It is important to stress this point merely because, under conditions of advanced neoliberal hegemony, it becomes all too easy to collapse the anti-essentialism of these thinkers into a naive individualism which believes that 'everyone is just free to be who they want to be'.[12] Perhaps the most perfect summary of the radically relational, deconstructive understanding of identity is Judith Butler's assertion that 'identity is the lived scene of coalition's difficulty' (1993: 115): in other words, every experience of identity is an experience of the complexity inherent in managing a range of necessarily social, collective, political commitments and claims.

Modes of Relationality

Perhaps one reason why the liberal individualist misreading of post-structuralism is so easily made is that is it not always clear what the broader political implications of post-structuralist claims might be. I would suggest that this is not symptomatic of anything lacking in those claims, but rather because of the very high level of abstraction at which they remain applicable. To put this more simply: these claims proceed from the observation that all phenomena are, in some sense, relational; but if this observation really is applicable to *all* phenomena, then it is not always entirely clear what the political valency of observing this fact could possibly be. If everything is relational, then merely observing the relationality of everything amounts to a philosophical banality.

We can perhaps get a better sense of the issues at stake here if we consider a rather different usage of the term 'relational' in recent political discourse. Within the 'community-organising' movement, which has its roots in American cities and has recently received considerable attention on the British 'centre left', the terms 'relation', 'relational' and 'relationship' carry a particular valency, describing meetings, organisations and institutions which are said to possess a certain set of desirable qualities. Precisely what those qualities are is very rarely defined and is not always easy to discern, but broadly speaking, they entail anything which is seen to encourage the development of sustainable and meaningful relationships between their participants (see, for example, Cooke and Muire 2012). The problem with this formulation is that its advocates are vague to the point of incoherence on exactly what *kind* of relationships they want to promote. They accuse their neoliberal and managerialist opponents of ignoring the importance of human relationships and in the process seem to overlook the fact that neoliberalism does not *ignore* human relationships at all, but has a specific and very highly developed theory of them which informs all of its practice. Neoliberalism regards the commercial contract and the retail transaction as the ideal forms of relationship to which all others should aspire to conform and works to ensure that all relationships do conform to these models as far as it can. Ignoring this serves a useful rhetorical purpose for the advocates of 'relational' politics since it absolves them of the need to specify exactly what types of relationship they regard as desirable and also enables them

to paper over the very obvious differences between those among them who advocate a radically democratic politics of process, which places a high value on egalitarian, open-ended and inventively democratic forms of institutional and extra-institutional politics, and those who are motivated by an essentially conservative communitarianism, who want to defend particular sets of existing relationships within families and local communities. But it also leaves them apparently incapable of specifying the content of their political ambitions and strategising successfully to overcome the obstacles to them.

We can see here the limitations of simply advocating for 'relationality' as if it were a self-evident good. What is at stake here is the fact that different political projects work to enable and suppress different *modes of relationality*. Capitalism works not by denying relationality altogether, but by regulating our modes of relationality, prohibiting many types of relationship and only enabling others, to ensure that only those which facilitate capital accumulation can occur. In the process, the freedom which it denies us is the freedom to engage in fully co-operative and productive relationships with others that aren't oriented towards this goal. Authoritarian forms of socialism, by contrast, work to inhibit any form of relationship which might enable concentrations of power and resources to accumulate anywhere outside the purview of the state apparatus, denying citizens the freedom to engage in innovative private transactions. Having said this, and positing the concept of a 'mode of relationality' as a potentially useful one for political analysis, I would like to suggest that there is nonetheless something potentially useful about the concept of *infinite relationality* in elaborating what might be at stake in any radical concept of democracy, precisely to the extent to which, as we have seen, such a concept resists any idea that relationality can be limited to the context of a particular group or locality; as we shall shortly see, it cannot even be limited to the narrow world of the human. Infinite relationality is not something that can be practised or institutionalised, because it is indeed, on a certain level, merely a banal fact of existence; but it is precisely that which any radical democratic politics must always be aware of. What distinguishes a democratic politics from any other is the fact that it does not try to regulate the inherent complexity of human relations – which Arendt calls boundless action and which we have called here infinite relationality – by making social relations

simpler, but rather strives to give expression to their full complexity and the creative possibilities which this entails.

The Ecology of the Multitude

As I have just suggested, any proper thinking of infinite relationality must go beyond the consideration of merely inter-human relations, and must also consider relations between human and non-human elements of existence. The recognition that the human species – 'Man' – is not itself a sort of meta-individual, but exists in a relation of complex dependence with other elements of the biosphere, is one of the most politically significant shifts in both scientific and political thinking of recent times (Vernadsky 1986). It is also one which focusses attention on the relationship between humans of the present and the biosphere of the future, because current rates of human-induced climate change threaten the very viability of the latter. This is a crucial issue for us to consider, in part because it is one which constitutes the absolute limit point of neoliberal post-democracy's capacity to address pressing problems. Without some kind of collective decision making, of a kind and on a scale which cannot be limited to national communities, there is no chance that human behaviour will change sufficiently and in an appropriately co-ordinated manner to defend the viability of human and other forms of life; no informed commentator takes seriously the idea that some kind of market mechanism can solve the problem rather than exacerbate it.[13] The interdependence of different generations, the incalculability of our debt to the unknowable future, become much more than abstractions here. This is an issue which demands attention to the irreducible and incalculable interconnection between the human and the non-human at the level of geological time, even cosmic time, and at the molecular level, where oxygen is necessary to the processes of cellular metabolism. This is partly a question of our relationship to the non-human organic world – animals, plants, bacteria, fungi, and so on – but also of the relationship between organic and non-organic materialities, extending attention beyond the biosphere to what Deleuze and Guattari call the 'mechanosphere'. A thought of infinite relationality, attentive to the complexity of the mechanosphere, cannot remain tied to humanist assumptions as to the autonomy or cosmic centrality of human experience.

There might appear to be two quite distinct issues here: the human relationship to the 'natural' world, and the human relationship to technology. However, from the perspective we are developing, these topics are not easily separable, because the key issue in each case is the complex relationality of elements producing real material outcomes in the world. It is notable that both ecological and technological thought in recent years have been dramatically influenced by theories derived from studies of complex systems in mathematics, physics and biology (Prigogine and Stengers 1984), all of which tend to stress precisely the importance of understanding the complex and unpredictable consequences of the radically relational character of physical phenomena. At the same time, 'post-humanist' thought has been informed and enriched by theoretical investigations of the relationships between humans and all types of non-human, whether mechanical or organic (Braidotti 2013).

Historically, it is notable that several of the key theorists on whom this study has already drawn were specifically interested in both of these sets of issues. As well as writing optimistically about the political possibilities opened up by a potential democratisation of mass media production (Williams 1966, 1974), Raymond Williams also wrote an influential study of the relationships between 'the country and the city' (1973), reminding his readers that for Marx, one of the promises of communism was the abolition of the clear division between the two and of the inequalities and aesthetic imbalances which this division sustained. Guattari, whose concept of 'assemblage', 'machinic' philosophy remains hugely important in the study of technology and culture, and who hoped for a 'post-media era' of democratic communications (Guattari, Lotringer et al. 2009), was also a committed ecologist and stood in French regional elections as a Green Party candidate in 1992. In some of his last work, he proposes an 'ecosophy' which understands a wide range of different types of relation in terms of 'three ecologies': social, mental and environmental (Guattari 2000).

Guattari is not of course the first thinker to use the term 'ecology' to designate a general field of complex interdependence: he derives his use of the term partly from that of the cyberneticist Gregory Bateson (1972). Another important example is to be found in the psychologist James J. Gibson's classic *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*

(1979), which proposes that vision must be understood as emerging in a complex set of relations between organs and environment, rather than merely between brain and optic nerve. There are many other examples of the concept of ecology being used in such an expanded and productive way (see for example Fuller 2005). In some ways all of these approaches are prefigured in the early social theory of Gabriel Tarde, who proposes that all phenomena, including physical phenomena, may be understood as 'social' in character, to the extent that they are composed of aggregations of smaller elements whose systemic relations constitute their reality (Tarde 1895, 1999, 2010; Lazzarato 2002). Tarde was an important influence on Deleuze and Guattari and has been taken up very productively in recent years by thinkers such as Maurizio Lazzarato, and particularly by those working in the field of 'virology': the study of processes of affective transmission and ideational invention conceptualised in terms of 'viral' logics of replication and mutation (Parikka 2007, Sampson 2012). What all of these writers have in common is a commitment to understanding agency as emerging from complex and dynamic sets of relations rather than being the property of any kind of individual.

One influential way of conceptualising some of these issues has been the school of social theory associated with scholars such as Bruno Latour and John Law (Law and Hassard 1999, Latour 2005). 'Actor-network theory' focusses on relationships between agents in networks of power, knowledge and activity which can be human or non-human, organic or inorganic, proposing an understanding of agency which is not limited by humanist assumptions. From this perspective, a smartphone might be understood not merely as a passive object of use but as a relatively active element in an 'actor-network'. This is not to say that it is a conscious or intentional subject, but merely to observe that it may play a decisive role in enabling or determining a particular set of outcomes; consider, for example, the importance of mobile recording technologies in limiting the scope of action for police violence at demonstrations, or the importance of architecture and domestic facilities in shaping the ability of households to function pleasurably and productively. A very useful term which is used by theorists of technology whose thinking is close to Latour's is Gibson's concept of 'affordance' (1979): an affordance is a potentiality made available by a particular technology in a specific set

of social and material relations, which may or may not be actualised in particular situations. From this perspective, technologies (which is to say, assemblages of techniques and the tools required, if any, to deploy them) and technical objects play at least a quasi-active role in shaping every virtual field of potential action.

Of course, as has been well established by earlier generations of theorists (Williams 1974), every technological device is in some sense merely a tool whose emergence and use will be determined by social relations. But theorists at least since Marx have been aware that a naive humanism is inadequate to understanding the role of technology in human culture. Marx posits the combination of collective intelligence and technical capacity generated by industrial capitalism as constituting an expanded 'general intellect' (1973: 706), a collective intelligence which is embodied not only in the machinery or in human minds, but in the assemblage which they constitute together. Simondon devotes an entire work (2012) to developing a complex theory of 'technical objects', which cannot be conceptualised either as wholly autonomous quasi-subjects or as merely inert and passive objects of human intervention. Perhaps one of the most interesting contributions to this legacy in recent years has been Bernard Stiegler's observation that technicity as such is a constitutive feature of all human culture, that culture itself always takes a technical form, from the very earliest manifestations of tool making or cave art, and that a 'prosthetic' relation to technology is partially constitutive of the human condition as such; this is because Homo sapiens sapiens itself evolved in dependency with a sophisticated array of objects such as tools and clothing developed by its earlier hominid ancestors. The significance of all these approaches is, again, that they generate an understanding of 'culture' as never simply distinguishable from 'nature' and as always constituted within the horizon of a relationality which includes the relationships between humans and other elements of the ecosystems and mechanosystems which they inhabit.

Perhaps the most important thinker in recent times to have addressed these issues in English is Donna Haraway. Haraway's enormously influential 'cyborg manifesto' (1991) explicitly denounced the essentialist, primitivist, goddess-worshipping ecofeminism which was so influential amongst feminist activists in the 1980s, particularly on the west coast of North America. At its most simplistic, this kind

of politics tended to assert the necessary continuity of capitalism, industrialism, militarism, science and patriarchy and proposed a common rejection of all five. Although ecofeminism is itself a complex and variegated tradition, which is predicated on some entirely valid observations as to the mutual imbrication of the phenomena which it opposes (Gaard 1993), this form of it – which was closely allied to the primitivist Green politics of the activist group *Earth First!* which became widely influential on activist politics in the 1990s (Wall 1999) – was clearly limited in its political potential, especially for populations outside the New Age enclave of the Pacific north-west. Against this position and any equivalent humanism, Haraway suggests that the mutually transformatory relationship between humans and technical objects must be understood as a potent political resource. She evokes the image of the cyborg as a potential figure of a subject conscious of its eco-technical insertion into a field of social and material relations. In a passage which has particular relevance to this study, Haraway writes:

> The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family, this time without the oedipal project. The cyborg would not recognise the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust. Perhaps that is why I want to see if cyborgs can subvert the apocalypse of returning to nuclear dust in the manic compulsion to name the Enemy. Cyborgs are not reverent; they do not re-member the cosmos. They are wary of holism, but needy for connection – they seem to have a natural feel for united front politics, but without the vanguard party. The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential. (1991: 151)

Haraway's anti-Oedipal invocation of the technologically enabled post-human subject was controversial when she first wrote it in 1985. It seems far less so today, when, for all of their attendant problems, the revolutions in communications technologies which the Internet and mobile telephony have enabled have proved demonstrably valuable for many forms of social organisation and democratic activism (Hands

2011, Gerbaudo 2012). This is by no means to endorse a naively utopian view of the digital revolution. There are good arguments that some of its consequences are very troubling. Human brains which are over-saturated with electronic stimulation find it increasingly difficult to give concentrated attention to difficult tasks (Stiegler 2010, Davenport and Beck 2001). A growing critical consensus holds that the digitisation and de-historicisation of music culture in an age of instant access and low-fidelity has had a disastrous effect upon musical creativity, as musicians have lost the kind of dense, intense relationships with audiences and localities that they once had and as MP3 files (in audio terms, a vastly inferior medium to vinyl) become by far the most widely used playback format (Reynolds 2011). The capacity of huge corporations and state institutions to mine previously private data is an increasing cause of concern. And yet the very well-documented and developing use of such technologies by radical political groups is clear evidence that any simply anti-technological stance makes no sense in the contemporary epoch, even from an ecological perspective. Indeed, given the arguments already outlined in this section, we could say that it is important to understand that Haraway's cyborg *is* the very contemporary figure of a viable *eco-feminism*, a feminism which understands its ecological context to be not just an idealised Earth, but the mechanosphere itself. Haraway's own subsequent trajectory, producing a series of inspiring and fascinating studies of the post-human condition (Haraway 2008) and inspiring an entire genre of deconstructive 'cyber-feminism' (Shaw 2000; Zylinska 2001, 2002; Weinstone 2004), certainly bears out this claim.

It is important to acknowledge that the idea of a complex relationality organising relationships amongst humans and between humans and non-humans is by no means an invention of social and cultural theory. It is an idea which has developed in biology, anthropology, sociology, social history and geography at least since the nineteenth century, and in particular it is an idea traditionally associated with radical interpretations of Darwin. Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection has been the subject of competing political and metaphysical interpretations since the moment of its publication (Darwin 2003), as have the various genetic models derived from it. Marking the border between nature and culture, genetics is always a controversial and highly politicised field. In the late nineteenth century, proto-genetic thought

gave rise to the eugenic theories of racial superiority, inferiority and degeneration which would animate both the later stages of European colonialism and the emergence of fascism after the First World War (Bashford and Levine 2010). At the same time, 'social Darwinism' notoriously married evolutionary theory to a liberal ideology of competitive individualism, claiming that social superiority in a modern society was attained by those 'fittest' to attain and wield it, and that this is an expression of the natural order as described by Darwin (Hawkins 1997). The great riposte to this idea, Peter Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* (1902), remains a classic of radical literature, demonstrating as it does the many instances in which species success is dependent upon relations of co-operation and mutual assistance. In more recent times, the Darwinian geneticist Richard Dawkins is often understood to have articulated a neoliberal Darwinism with his popular work *The Selfish Gene* (1976), although Dawkins himself has always been keen to deny that any politically normative implications should derive from his theory. In fact I would suggest that Dawkins's theory should not be understood as even tendentially neoliberal in its implications, because according to that theory, it is specifically the *gene*, and not the individual, which is 'selfish', seeking self-replication by any means available, with no necessary regard for the long-term well-being of its human host. If anything, this model undermines liberal individualist conceptions of agency and suggests that only complex social and cultural institutions are likely to be able to protect human intentionality from the disruptive and implacable force of the genetic drives.[14] At the same time, a considerable recent literature deriving from biology, anthropology, economics and sociology has been keen to refute once and for all the claim that modern genetic theory supports the historic assumptions of possessive individualism. The most comprehensive and magisterial of these studies is Bowles and Gintis's *A Cooperative Species* (2011), which offers compelling evidence from the genetic, anthropological and palaeontological record that an evolved capacity for – and tendency towards – co-operation and altruism is not only demonstrable in the history of human behaviour, but is the most likely explanation for the global success of Homo sapiens in competition with its prehistoric hominid rivals.

However, all of these theories, however social-ist they may be in their understanding of human co-operative tendencies, ultimately

deal only with intra-species co-operation. What is just as significant for understanding infinite relationality in its full ecological dimension is the importance of inter-species relations of interdependence, co-operation and more. This is true at the most personal level, in relationships between humans and their 'companion species' (Haraway 2003), but also at a cellular level. The influential biologist Lynn Margulis, who condemned all 'capitalistic' interpretations of Darwin and stressed the importance to evolution of symbiotic processes, has demonstrated that some of the most basic elements of cellular life – in particular mitochondria, the crucial energy-converting elements of eukaryotic cells – emerged as the result of symbioses between different simple organisms. The consequences are profound: at the basic cellular level, life as we know it became possible only when previously distinct micro-organisms entered into a permanent form of symbiosis to create a more complex organism, which nonetheless preserved much of the identity of its component elements (Margulis 1998). Luciana Parisi has argued persuasively that this idea radically challenges Oedipal understandings of sex and sexuality as reducible to conventional heterosexual reproduction (Parisi 2004). This is a very interesting proposition from the perspective being developed here, because it implies that both life and evolution are constituted by relational processes, and that the modes of relationality which produce life and organic novelty cannot be reduced to variants of the family form.

In fact it is possible to take this generalisation of relational thinking even further. Arguably one of the implications of modern physics is an understanding of matter itself as not at all the solid and stable substance of the traditional imagination, but as itself constituted by dynamic relations between particles which themselves can only be conceived, not as the tiny pieces of hard reality which Democritus envisaged, but as mobile positions in space–time: vectors more than objects. The relational and processual nature of material reality itself is the basis for a whole ontology and metaphysics in the thinking of Deleuze and of some of his key influences, most notably the early twentieth-century philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1920, 1929). For Deleuze and Whitehead, or at least for their contemporary readers (Jane Bennett, for example) one of the key implications of this way of thinking is to observe that creativity is a property of matter itself (Bennett 2010: 7). This may seem a difficult concept to grasp, but it

is quite straightforward if we try to think about the implications of maintaining a philosophical position which is genuinely materialist in character, denying the reality of any supernatural agency or any extra-material spirit, soul or mind. From such a perspective, how do we explain the emergence of complex substances and organisms capable of attaining consciousness and creative agency, if these are not somehow immanent properties of matter itself? For Whitehead, in fact, one implication is that even consciousness can no longer be understood logically as an exclusive property of human or other animal brains, but must be in some sense an immanent property of all matter (Whitehead 1929, 1933). This philosophy of 'panpsychism' should not be understood as a kind of simplistic animism, but rather as implying a complex understanding of consciousness and agency whereby these are real phenomena, but cannot be conceived simply as the properties of individual subjects. They are rather, in Simondon's terms, partial individuations which emerge from a field of relationality that precedes its terms and objects.

Whether these observations have any real political implications is an interesting question. They don't seem to have had for Whitehead, who was a Theist, a Platonist, and certainly not a political radical. It would be quite possible to integrate these insights, along with those of some of their key philosophical antecedents, such as Spinoza and Bergson, into a sort of materialist mysticism, which would acknowledge the interconnectedness of all things and the illusory status of individuality, without this having any obvious implications for the practice of politics – which is, after all, primarily about the way humans, as conscious and intentional subjects, do or do not relate to each other. Nonetheless, a number of recent and contemporary thinkers have tried to derive some political implications from them, or at least to put them at the service of radical political analysis. Clearly the most important attempt at such an intervention to date remains Deleuze and Guattari's collaboration, and this has been a key inspiration for thinkers such as Isabelle Stengers, William Connolly, Jane Bennett and others (Prigogine and Stengers 1984; DeLanda 2002; Shaviro 2009; Bennett 2010; Stengers 2010, 2011) in their attempts to synthesise political positions informed by complexity theory and this radically materialist philosophical current.[15]

What exactly, in conventional terms, these political implications might be is often not terribly clear. Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* actually concludes with an explicit acknowledgement that the political and normative implications of her 'vital materialism' should be spelled out more clearly but haven't been.

> So, I will just end with a litany, a kind of Nicene Creed for would-be vital materialists: 'I believe in one matter-energy, the maker of things seen and unseen. I believe that this pluriverse is traversed by heterogeneities that are continually *doing things*. I believe it is wrong to deny vitality to nonhuman bodies, forces, and forms, and that a careful course of anthropomorphization can help reveal that vitality, even though it resists full translation and exceeds my comprehensive grasp. I believe that encounters with lively matter can chasten my fantasies of human mastery, highlight the common materiality of all that is, expose a wider distribution of agency, and reshape the self and its interests.' (Bennett 2010: 122)

Intriguingly, Bennett's colleague William Connolly opens his major work *A World of Becoming* with a parallel description of his adherence to a similar philosophy as a statement of religious faith.

> I confess the philosophy/faith of a world that is immanent to itself. It includes the themes of complexity, distributive agency, connectionism, open systems, and time as becoming. I think Stuart Kauffman, Ilya Prigogine, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Gilles Deleuze share with me such a position, broadly defined. To affirm radical immanence is to confess the contestable faith/conviction that the evolution of every open system in the universe and the interconnections between them occur without the hand, intervention, guidance, or inspiration of a divinity. We also advance the view that, while each temporal system is marked by pluri-potentiality as it forms intersections with others, there is no final purpose governing time as such. (Connolly 2011a: 37–8)

What is very striking is just how compatible such thinking is with the philosophy of the multitude. Immanence, complexity, the irreducibility of the singular to the totality, the coexistence of multiple 'existential

territories' (Guattari 1989): these are precisely the hallmarks of the current which runs through the thought of Spinoza, Deleuze, Guattari, Negri and Lazzarato. What Connolly's affirmations also potentially add, in the spirit of Gabriel Tarde (Tarde 1999), is the possibility of understanding sociality as such as no longer restricted to the domain of the human. The multitude is inseparable from the interdependent ecologies with which it exists in perpetual relations of co-constitution: it both makes and is made by the ecology of material relations which it inhabits.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, it seems that a complex 'vital materialism', as confessed by Bennett and Connolly, and pioneered by thinkers from Bergson (1913a, 1913b) to Stengers, is at least compatible with, and perhaps necessary to the thinking of infinite relationality which is proposed by this book. And although it is sometimes unclear in Connolly's work what the political or normative implications of this perspective might be, both Connolly and Isabelle Stengers, to whom he refers in this passage, have actually offered some very explicit statements in response to just this question. Stengers declares her allegiance to the legacy of 'Seattle' (Pignarre and Stengers 2011: 3), referring to the dramatic protests against global neoliberalism which succeeded in shutting down the meeting of the World Trade Organisation in that city in 1999 (Shepard and Hayduk 2002). Connolly, while distancing himself from anti-capitalism, has affirmed his solidarity with the Occupy movement and made a very concrete set of proposals for political and economic reforms which might become key demands for it (2011b). Broadly speaking, these writers have affirmed their commitment to those movements which seek to pose a radical democratic challenge to neoliberalism, and convincingly align that commitment to their vital materialist ontology.

On another level, of course, their 'ecosophical' ideas simply imply that any progressive or democratic politics must be attentive to the ecological questions which the Green movement has raised and continues to pursue. Given the extraordinary lack of progress since the 1980s in addressing the causes of climate change, there is no question that this is an important issue, and that the development of a philosophical perspective which can help to overcome the conceptual obstacles to such progress is incredibly valuable in itself. At the same time, it is important to note that the convergence of ecological ideas

with a commitment to radical, plural and participatory democracy is by no means new, and radical democratic reform of the kind advocated by this book has been a part of the platform of Green parties for many years, just as those parties have often pioneered techniques in horizontal organisation: in the United Kingdom, for example, the Green Party only recently changed its constitution to allow for the election of a single leader, rather than a pair or group of leaders; this was widely understood by members as a strategic concession to an individualistic political culture which required that the party be identified with a particular name and face, rather than as a change of fundamental principle. The relative success of this strategy was born out when the party won its first parliamentary seat in the 2010 general election. This should stand as an important reminder to us that even the most horizontalist and immanentist political practice must at times adopt a strategic orientation and a hegemonic ambition if it is to have any success in the actual world (Laclau 2001, Gilbert 2008b).

Given that Green parties have been advocating radical democracy for years, it might be that there isn't much that this book, or the philosophy of complex vital materialism, can add to their existing positions and practices. However, I would argue that there are at least two sets of ideas and arguments which, while they may have currency within some sections of the Green movement, deserve greater prominence. One is that the global ecological crisis is, fundamentally, a democratic crisis, in that it is precisely symptomatic of the incapacity of existing systems of decision making to produce an effective collective decision about how to change behaviour in order to avert catastrophe. The great weakness of initiatives such as the 'Green New Deal', a detailed proposal for economic restructuring towards a sustainable economy made by the New Economics Foundation,[16] is that they tend to be presented as if it were politically realistic to expect post-democratic governments simply to implement radical economic reforms from above. It should be clear from the arguments made so far in this book that this is extremely unlikely to happen. The other set of ideas worth mentioning is one that has been closely associated with the philosophical tradition which informs vital materialism. Spinoza, Nietzsche, Whitehead, Bergson and Deleuze are today the key sources for a widespread interest amongst scholars in the humanities and social sciences in the concept of 'affect': that dimension of experience which

includes emotions, sensations and physical states, but which cannot be understood in terms of conventional ideas of meaning, language and rationality. This is a politically important idea for the Green movement, as it is for all political projects, because it points towards something which these projects often find it very difficult to engage with, which is the irrational but real attachments, and the sensory and corporeal pleasures, which people derive from participating in the very high levels of consumption which define contemporary Western lifestyles, but which are surely ecologically unsustainable. This is an important topic for us also, because, as we shall see in the next chapter, it is a necessary issue to engage with in any attempt to formulate a non-individualist conception of sociality and collectivity.

6

Feeling Together: Affect, Identity and the Politics of the Common

Common Feeling

In the last chapter we spent some time investigating Gilbert Simondon's theories of collectivity and individuation. There is one other aspect of Simondon's understanding of collectivity which we must consider here, because it is central to his argument, to the ways in which it influenced Deleuze and Guattari (and by extension Hardt and Negri, and many contemporary theorists[1]), and to the theorisation of the concept which we mentioned at the end of that chapter: affect. Simondon writes:

> If we can speak, in a certain sense, of the individuality of a group or of a people, it is not by virtue of a community of action – too discontinuous to be a solid basis – nor of an identity of conscious representations, too broad and too continuous to allow the segregation of groups; rather it is at the level of affectivo-emotional themes, mixtures of representation and action, that collective groupings constitute themselves. Inter-individual participation is possible when affectivo-emotive expressions are the same. The vehicles of this affective community are elements in the life of groups which are effective but which are not only symbolic: the regime of sanctions and rewards, symbols, the arts, objects which are collectively valorised and de-valorised. (Simondon 2005: 248–9)

Simondon is here proposing that what really tends to bind groups together is neither their commitment to some common activity or project (as rationalist and instrumentalist theories might assume) nor their identification with consciously identifiable images or ideas, but rather a set of shared sentiments and sensations which operate at what he calls a 'subconscious' level. Now, Simondon is at pains to differentiate his understanding of the 'affective subconscious' from the psychoanalytic model of the self as he understands it, for interesting reasons. It is worth keeping in mind here that the term 'subconscious', although it is often used in everyday speech, has no real place in Freud's model of the personality, which is predicated on a radical separation between the conscious and the unconscious. Freud did posit an intermediary layer – the 'censorship' mechanism which protects the conscious mind from having to confront the reality of unconscious wishes or repressed memories – but only visualised it as a sort of semi-porous barrier between two parts of the psyche. At the same time, Freud's model of group psychology does not actually accord a primary role to the unconscious, instead understanding the unconscious, irrational relations of suggestion which obtain between group members as being dependent upon an identification with the leader which may not be particularly rational, but is certainly conscious and representable.[2] Simondon sees things rather differently, arguing for 'a fundamental layer of the unconscious which is the subject's capacity for action' (2005: 248); he names this the 'affective' or 'affectivo-emotive' subconscious.[3] Simondon's model implies that our capacity to act in the world is in fact dependent upon our relations with others, relations which are constitutive of our subjectivity as such and which cannot always be easily represented in any conscious way, and he sees these relations as occurring at the level of emotion and, crucially, 'affect'.[4]

The Affective Turn

'Affect' has become a key term in much recent cultural and political theory. It is a term which is sometimes used as entirely synonymous with 'emotion', but Simondon is at pains to differentiate the two, and this differentiation – via Brian Massumi's account of it in his famous essay 'The Autonomy of Affect' (2002) – has become central to recent

understandings of it. Affect is understood by these philosophers as a dimension of experience which is at once physical and psychological, a domain of varying intensities which are not fully articulated, individuated and represented in consciousness; 'emotion' might be understood as what we experience once we have identified an affective shift and represented it to ourselves as something which can be named and which can be understood as happening to us internally as individuals. 'Affect' is a term derived primarily from Spinoza's major work, his *Ethics*;[5] but probably the most useful and widely cited definition comes from Massumi's translator's preface to the English edition of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*. Here Massumi describes affect as

> a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution of that body's capacity to act … (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include 'mental' or ideal bodies). (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: xvi)

A good way to understand this is to observe some of the ways in which sound works as a communicative medium. Consider, for example, the ways in which a speaker's tone of voice affects any instance of verbal communication. It is a truism of pop psychology to say that tone of voice actually 'communicates' more to the listener than does the semantic content of an utterance, dramatically influencing the actual effects of the utterance.[6] But what is it that is actually conveyed by tone of voice, and why? We could say that exactly what is conveyed by vocal tone is affect, and that this is because tone actually indexes a change in the physical state of the speaker (heart rate, breathing, etc.), and that its effects upon the receptivity of the listener are a very good example of changes occurring in a body's capacity to act – they may become more or less open to persuasion, more or less likely to react with anger, more or less sexually aroused, more or less willing to go to war, and so on. A considerable body of work in cultural studies uses this concept to understand the effectivity of music, dependent as it is upon music's affective power (Grossberg 1992, Gilbert 2004c). The way in which certain kinds of music facilitate certain kinds of dancing is another good example of an affect corresponding to an

augmentation of a body's capacity to act, while the use of music as a kind of weapon exemplifies the opposite: consider the US army's occasional use of loud music to torture besieged enemies, or the public playing of classical music recordings at London tube stations in order to discourage teenagers from congregating (Goodman 2010). The idea of affect is relevant not just to the analysis of music's uses however; it has been taken up across many different fields of social, cultural and political theory in recent years, to the point where some commentators have identified an 'affective turn' as taking place in the past decade (Clough and Halley 2007, Thrift 2007).

One of the most important dimensions of this work has been its emphasis on the social nature of affect. To focus attention on the affective dimension of experience is to observe the extent to which bodies are constantly influencing each other and to which, as Simondon insists, these relations of mutual influence are often constitutive of their capacity to act at all. Arguably this is an idea which runs through the history of Western thinking about affect since the seventeenth century, even where the term is not explicitly used. Spinoza can be read as rejecting both mind–body dualism and individualism in his argument that all states of mind, being affective states, are also states of the body, to the extent that those states are themselves always relational states (Spinoza 2000). The two towering figures of the Scottish Enlightenment – David Hume and Adam Smith – both proposed that what they called 'sympathy' should be recognised as a fundamental element of human relations and the effective basis for all ethics and morality (Hume 1972, Mullan 1988, Smith 2009). 'Sympathy' for Hume and Smith is precisely a sort of affective relation which enables humans to share the feelings of others, and to have their own affective states altered by events which occur in the lives of others, without having any rational, personal or self-interested reason to do so. This idea is arguably close to Girard and Borch-Jacobsen's idea of 'mimetic identification' and would also seem to have some support in contemporary neuroscience. Some neuroscientists claim, with good evidence, that our brains are partly composed of 'mirror neurones', which hypothetically cause us automatically to experience the affective states which we perceive other bodies to be experiencing, without necessarily having to be socialised or trained into such behaviour (Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia 2008).[7]

Hume was a direct influence on Deleuze, who remains the key point of reference for Anglophone 'affect theory' today, not least through his own readings of Hume, Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Bergson (Gregg and Seigworth 2010). Deleuze's work with Guattari (which, interestingly, is the only product of the great efflorescence of French philosophy in the 1960s and 1970s to make any substantial engagement with music[8]), his books on art and cinema, and his various philosophical studies, all propose approaches in which the structuralist emphasis on verbal language as the model template for all forms of communication, and even for the structure of the unconscious (Lacan 2006), is challenged by an alternative emphasis on the importance of sensory, corporeal affective elements and processes. One of the most lucid reflections of the political implications of this approach comes from the American philosopher John Protevi, who draws from Deleuze and Guattari an ethical and political position which has at its heart the valorisation of 'joyous affect', which he defines as affect which increases the potential power of bodies, enabling them 'to form new and potentially empowering encounters' (Protevi 2009: 51). It is crucial to understand all that is at stake in this brilliantly concise formulation. Whereas the individualist tradition and Leviathan logic can only understand social relations as ultimately *limiting* the capacity of individuals, this philosophy emphasises the extent to which the only thing that increases the capacity of bodies is in fact their ability to form productive relations with other bodies, and it specifically identifies joy itself with such an augmentation of potential and relationality. Where the Freud–Le Bon model of group psychology understands affective relations as both pathological and ultimately dependent upon individual identifications, the model drawn from these thinkers sees them as the key medium of collective agency and creativity.

This emphasis on affect – or, in Simondon's terms, '*affectivity*' (2005: 249–61) – as the basic medium of intersubjectivity and agency can, if treated casually, give the impression that affect is somehow always a positive force. Of course, in simple terms, this is a mistake; because affects can be negative, indexing a diminution of agency, as well as positive. However recent work in the autonomist tradition goes further than this, drawing attention to the ways in which contemporary capitalist culture works through the active production of affects and affective relations. This occurs on several levels. Firstly,

sociologists have been observing at least since the early 1980s the ways in which the service and retail sectors increasingly depend on the 'emotional labour' of flight attendants, shop assistants, waiters, carers, receptionists, and those from many other occupations (Hochschild 1983). The production of a conducive atmosphere, of an illusion of intimacy, of a general mood of receptivity, is crucial to many sites of commercial activity today. This is not true only at the level of retail interaction and personal service delivery. On a much larger scale, contemporary marketing relies on the general circulation of affects of excitement ('buzz', for example) and attention, and on the active cultivation of mimetic, suggestive relations ('viral' marketing).

And it is not only at the level of consumption that affective relations have become crucial to contemporary capitalism. As global manufacturing industries have migrated to south-east Asia, most kinds of work in the overdeveloped world now involve specialised forms of communication, the management of information flows, the production of services and intangible goods rather than finished objects, and the deployment of 'soft' or 'creative skills' – from call centres to design studios to company boardrooms. This type of work has been famously theorised by Maurizio Lazzarato as 'immaterial labour' (Virno and Hardt 1996), a theorisation which has been further developed in Hardt and Negri's concept of 'biopolitical labour'. This term designates forms of labour which require a degree of affective involvement and which are geared towards the production of affects, social relationships and forms of life (Hardt and Negri 2009: 131–3). A distinctive feature of biopolitical labour is the extent to which it involves the deployment of skills, resources and competences which derive from social spheres other than those of work: social networks, knowledge of trends and changing fashions in a multiplicity of fields, informal interpersonal skills, self-presentation according to codes of casual fashion rather than those of traditional formality, connoisseurship of various kinds, empathy. Along with the breakdown of traditional working patterns and the invasion by work of non-work time in the form of 24-hour, 7-days-a-week email cycles such as are typical of many professional work contexts, the difference between activity oriented towards capital accumulation and activity which is not so oriented becomes harder and harder to discern (Gregg 2011). In such a context, affectivity becomes the key domain of value production and exploitation. Of course, it

could be argued that this does not constitute any real change from the forms of production which typified capitalist industry for most of the twentieth century. Gramsci himself, in the essay which coined the term 'Fordism', pointed out that the highly organised, intensive industrialism of that epoch required a whole regime of regulation both inside and outside the factory in order to produce the kind of disciplined workforce that it required, with a far more strictly gendered division of labour than had previously obtained in working-class communities and a new focus on the regulation of the sexual and leisure lives of workers.[9] We might therefore say that Fordism constituted just as complete an 'affective regime' as does the later system of post-Fordist biopolitical production. However, Gramsci specifically points to the fact that the mechanisation and automation of the industrial process under Fordism prevents the worker from making the kind of attentive and affective investment in labour that earlier forms of work – particularly craft work – involved. Rather than bemoaning the loss of 'authentic' work, Gramsci sees this as potentially liberating for workers precisely to the extent that it leaves them mentally and emotionally autonomous from their work (Gramsci 1971: 309–10). It is in the spirit of this observation that Hardt and Negri see biopolitical labour's new emphasis on using the creativity and personality of the worker as basic raw materials as constituting an intensification of exploitation, rather than the liberation from uncreative drudgery which post-Fordist rhetoric celebrating the rise of 'creative industries' tends to promise (McRobbie 1998, Hesmondhalgh 2002).

In addition to these writers in the Spinozan–Marxist–Simondonian–Deleuzian tradition – following Guattari, we could call this the 'schizoanalytic' tradition[10] – it is worth noting that a number of writers with quite different theoretical orientations have been interested in comparable sets of issues. Indeed, it is important to note that the rather simple opposition which has emerged in the preceding discussion between 'psychoanalytic' and 'non-psychoanalytic' approaches is potentially misleading, because arguably only a relatively narrow strand of theory and practice within psychoanalysis has remained fully committed to the Freudian model of the psyche and the assumptions about the nature of sociality which it informs and on which it depends. In particular the 'object relations' tradition initiated by Melanie Klein, which has influenced a great deal of Anglophone

psychotherapy, arguably tends towards an inherently less individualistic conception of subjectivity than does classical Freudianism, stressing as it does the importance of relations of 'attachment' rather than merely of identification or desire, in the formation of the psyche (Winnicott 1964, Bowlby 1969). Having said this, even these strands of psychoanalysis, and even the mainstream of the 'group analysis' movement, ultimately seem to remain tied to a basically Freudian individualism (Bion 1961: 127–9), never breaking with the assumption that is it the isolated individual who remains the basic unit of human experience.

Theorists borrowing from the psychoanalytic tradition but also from other philosophical and sociological approaches have gone further, however (Sedgwick 2003, Berlant 2011). Most notably the American theorist Teresa Brennan offers a daring theorisation of 'the transmission of affect' which understands affect's transmissibility – the fact that, put simply, one person's mood can seemingly affect another's directly – as evidence for her general thesis that the self-contained individual is a myth, a product of bourgeois ideology (Brennan 2004). Brennan's main theoretical resources for this thesis are drawn, perhaps surprisingly, from the neo-Freudian psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, whom she interprets as arguing that an individualised form of subjectivity is specific to the culture of capitalist modernity and not a historical invariant (Brennan 1993). It is unfortunate to note that Brennan (1993, 2004) is entirely dismissive of Deleuze and Guattari, as this is more or less precisely the thesis of their *Anti-Oedipus*. The question of exactly how far Lacan's theories do or don't conflict with those of Deleuze and Guattari is a highly contentious one, although very few followers of either camp have believed them to be compatible; and by the same token, Brennan's reading of Lacan has not been influential.[11] Nonetheless, her investigation of affective transmission demonstrates that a schizoanalytic framework is not the only one within which the same basic conclusions can be drawn: namely, that lateral, horizontal affective relations are constitutive of both sociality and subjectivity, and that the realisation of this truth must undermine any simple individualism.

Finally, Brennan also offers some intriguing speculation on what might be the actual material mechanics of affective transmission, suggesting that the olfactory system, unconsciously registering

changes in the precise hormonal composition of individual subjects' perspiration, which would itself be a complex chemical index of their affective state, may be the key organ of such transmission: in other words, we might literally smell each other's fear, excitement, pride or admiration. This is a very intriguing prospect. It could be argued that this theory remains trapped within a model of affects as originating with the person and being transmitted from one to the other in a quas-semiotic process, rather than appreciating – in a properly Spinozan and Simondonian manner – that affects are always already social and relational; so it is not so much a question of affects passing from one body to another, but rather of them only arising at all at the moment of their interaction. On the other hand, it might be that a complex material field comprising multiple bodies, skin surfaces, olfactory systems and brains is the actual material substance of Simondon's 'transindividual', and Brennan may yet prove to have made an important contribution as the first thinker from within the Anglophone humanities to explore this possibility. What is certainly true is that while neuroscience has become a frequent reference point for philosophy and cultural theory, almost no work seems to have been done on the cultural mechanics of the endocrine system, which surely is the key mechanism of affective response in the human body; Brennan's work remains highly significant for at least gesturing towards the possibility of such an investigation.

The other key writer to mention here is none other than the founding figure of British cultural studies, Raymond Williams. One of Williams's key concepts throughout his work was what he called 'structures of feeling' (Williams 1977). This is a term whose meaning is very close to Foucault's 'discursive formation' and to Deleuze and Guattari's 'assemblage' (Foucault 1972, Deleuze and Guattari 1988). In each case, the concept is used to try to designate a specific complex of ideas, practices, experiences and sentiments which do not necessarily cohere into a single, homogeneous world view, but which are constituted by a particular 'unity of distribution' (Foucault 1972: 66) of meanings, sentiments, sensations and possibilities. Considering how important crystallography is for Simondon, it is especially interesting to note Williams's claim that 'structures of feeling can be defined as social experiences *in solution*, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been *precipitated* and are more

immediately available' (1977: 134, emphasis added). Williams uses these terms to describe affective formations which have not acquired a full individuation, which remain discernible but more or less vague or incoherent. He gives examples of structures of feeling when he argues that '[i]n England between 1660 and 1690, for example, two distinct structures of feeling (among the defeated Puritans and in the restored Court) can be readily distinguished' (1977: 134). A more recent example of such a 'structure of feeling' might be 'punk' in the 1970s and subsequently. Punk was and has continued to be defined by a configuration of shared affective predispositions – towards concentrated expressions of intense energy, against prolixity and apparent self-indulgence – but the semantic expression of them, and the ideological significance attached to them, has wildly varied, from the radical experimentalism and revolutionary politics which characterised the 'post-punk' avant-garde (Reynolds 2005), to the explicit formal conservatism which has characterised the history of 'garage', 'indie' and 'alternative' rock bands taking their inspiration from the Ramones and the Modern Lovers.[12] The significance of this example for our wider argument is that punk is clearly an important example of a widely distributed and intensely felt mode of collective experience, what Grossberg has called an 'affective alliance' (1992), but one which cannot be understood as operating according to a simple logic of identification, common purpose or even shared meaning. It is very important for our understanding of recent intellectual history to observe just how close Raymond Williams was in his thinking to figures such as Simondon and Deleuze and Guattari. Williams is normally seen as a distinctively British type of thinker, who became isolated from intellectual fashion just when the influence of 'French theory' was at its height in the Anglophone academy. In fact it is becoming increasingly clear that what Williams was isolated from was a particular Anglophone importation of French structuralism, of a kind which had already been superseded by some of the most important advances in French thought, and that his motivations for not embracing it, or the 'British post-structuralism' which resulted from it (Easthope 1988), were very close to the motivations of thinkers such as Deleuze and Guattari in trying to develop an alternative which could go further in freeing itself from the legacy of individualist assumptions (Gilbert 2004c, Seigworth 2006). What is of crucial importance for our

argument here is the fact that Williams, despite coming from a very different intellectual tradition, clearly has to mobilise a concept very like Simondon's and Deleuze's understanding of affective relations in order to pursue his project.

I promised at the end of Chapter 5 to elaborate on the specific relevance of the affective politics of the Green movement, and this is a good point at which to do that in order to illustrate the political relevance of the concepts which we are discussing. A good historic example is the anti-roads movement in the United Kingdom in the 1990s, which at its key moments of political success managed to bring together and co-ordinate the activities of a diverse range of constituencies (conservative suburban homeowners, conservationists, radical Green Anarchists, and others) to defend various tracts of English and Scottish woodland from road developments – constituencies which clearly did not have any shared understanding of what they were doing or why (McKay 1998, Wall 1999). Only a set of common objectives and complementary practices with which to achieve them bound together the participants; it was quite obvious that the meanings which they attached to those objectives and practices which held them together were in many cases radically divergent. Radical ecologists understood their actions as part of a global struggle to defend the Earth from capitalist exploitation, while local conservatives understood their actions in terms of a defence of access to land, regarding this as a particular right and privilege of inhabitants of their localities. Perhaps only at the level of affect, in the form of a certain visceral and essentially *aesthetic* attachment to the environments which were under threat – in particular ancient woodlands – and a general suspicion of the corporate interests which threatened them, would it be possible to discern any kind of commonality at all as enabling these aims and practices to cohere. This is a good example of the importance of affective relations to effective politics.

Identification: Becoming

How exactly such affective relations work is not a question in which Williams was very interested, but it is obviously important to us here. We have already seen how Borch-Jacobsen explores the idea of mimetic identification and sees the implicit mutuality of its processes

as undermining the 'law of the subject'. For Deleuze and Guattari, the issue here would be to acknowledge both the molecular, 'rhizomatic' dimension of the processes which both constitute groups and individuate persons *and* the molar, 'arborescent' dimension, which is the level at which psycho-social processes such as 'identification' might be discerned. At the same time, they arguably go further than any of the writers we have discussed so far in this chapter in moving away from any notion of subjectivity – personal or collective – as operating according to stable logics of identification and substitution; in particular through their deployment of the concept of 'becoming'. This is a term which dates back to ancient Greek philosophy but which takes on a particular importance for Nietzsche (1968), Whitehead, Deleuze and others for its capacity to express the dynamic and processual nature of all existence, against the ancient metaphysical idea that what is essentially real must be unchanging. For Deleuze and Guattari, processes of transformation are understood as in some sense constitutive of all entities. From this perspective, nothing is ever actually static and stable in its identity: even rocks and mountains are, as every geologist knows, in a constant state of flux and motion when observed at the appropriate temporal scale; and so it is not the *identity* as such of any phenomenon which is worth knowing about: what is important is its rates of change in its various aspects and the directions in which those changes seem to be moving. Every assemblage, they say, is defined primarily by its 'lines of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 7–9), the transformational vectors which shape it while also making it impossible for it simply to remain what it is. Becoming is generally understood by them in terms of a vector of transformation situated between the current state of a thing or person and some potential future state, which is always conceived as having a less 'molar' status than the present condition. This vector is normally expressed by the formulation 'becoming-*x*': becoming-child, becoming-woman, becoming-animal are their key examples (all of them, significantly, terms which represent divergences from the figure of the adult male human as the universal standard of normality). Becoming is not a relation of imitation, but a process which is always understood to occur *between* two terms, and which destabilises the clear identity of either, involving the mobilisation of various affective potentialities of the bodies concerned.

> In a way, we must start at the end: all becomings are already molecular. That is because becoming is not to imitate or identify with something or someone. Nor is it to proportion formal relations. Neither of these two figures of analogy is applicable to becoming: neither the imitation of a subject nor the proportionality of a form. Starting from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfills, becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are closest to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes. (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 272–3)

With Deleuze and Guattari's theorisation of becoming, which has proved so important for radical political theory in recent years (Braidotti 2002, Connolly 2011a) we have moved a long way from the meta-individualism of Freud's model of identification. I would suggest that we can usefully understand Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of becoming here as a radicalisation of and complement to Simondon's understanding of individuation and affective-emotive relations in the transindividual field. While Simondon already stresses the always processual, never completed nature of individuation, Deleuze and Guattari posit 'becoming' as the mode of emergence of types of agent which can only be thought of as very partially individuated, to the extent that they are composed of myriad mobile elements whose status is defined by their position in relation to others, which are themselves constantly in motion. An important point here is that flows of affect are not understood as necessarily travelling between individual persons, but through populations of elements which may include persons, or some elements thereof, but which need not all be bodies in the same way or at the same time. In fact this understanding of affect would resonate with a recent argument made by Caroline Williams, to the effect that Spinoza himself had always posited affect as a process 'without a subject' (Williams 2010).

Considering the foregoing discussion, we can see the various thinkers we have discussed as occupying various points on a continuum which runs from Freud's 'Leviathan logic' – his assumption that the social group is essentially an aggregation of individuals whose mutual attachment is entirely dependent upon their relationship to a leader, and that the kinds of affects which can circulate between

members of a group are typically more or less pathological – through Borch-Jacobsen's theory of mimetic identification, to Simondon's understanding of the inherently transindividual nature of the affective-emotive subconscious, through to the Deleuzo-Guattarian–Spinozan understanding of affect as a process without a subject, and becoming as a process which does not begin or end with identity.[13] Why this is so important is because, as we saw in the case of Raymond Williams, every attempt to think through the social and collective nature of human experience must somehow confront these issues, and develop some sense of what the relationship between 'individuals' and each other and any wider collectivity actually is. I have also suggested that any radical democratic approach to these issues must be able to take account of the possibility that, at least sometimes, relations of mutuality and lateral influence can characterise processes of group formation and group behaviour. However, it is important to remember that this doesn't mean that other processes and behaviours – as described by Freud, Lacan, even Le Bon and Hobbes, and above all by Laclau and Mouffe – do not take place. And yet, confined to that model, it becomes rather difficult to see why any other form of social organisation might ever obtain for any length of time: which is why it has been important for us to explore alternative models of sociality, collectivity and subjectivity.

So we have a model of sociality, collectivity and subjectivity which manages not to be defined by the logic of individualism or meta-individualism, which can understand the horizontal, transversal, transindividual dimensions of experience through which collectivities – 'subject groups' – might be formed which are not dependent for their mode of collective individuation upon hierarchical and 'vertical' relationships. The question now is: what can we do with it, analytically or politically?

Capitalism and Democracy in the Societies of Control[14]

One answer is that this model allows us to understand much more clearly and deeply what is at stake in the relationships between post-Fordist capitalism, neoliberalism, and contemporary forms of opposition to both. Post-Fordist capitalism is distinguishable from its immediate predecessor in that it thrives on the constitution of social scenes and

social forms wherein a dynamic form of sociality obtains which is not characterised by clearly vertical relations. The foregoing discussion should make clear why the creative potential inherent in such a model should be attractive to leading sections of capital, explaining why the classic model of the post-Fordist enterprise is, as we have already mentioned, characterised by flat management, dynamic networking and a valorisation of creativity amongst staff at all levels (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). The great symbolic capitalist institutions of the present age – Apple, Google, Facebook – are all primarily in the business of technologically facilitating the mobilisation of vast quantities of information and the creation of lateral relationships between diverse nodes. It is no surprise that leading-edge media theorists (Sampson 2012, for example) have looked to Deleuze and Guattari and to theories of contagion and suggestion for inspiration, because advanced media practices – from Twitter to viral marketing – all seem to depend upon a logic whereby discrete 'molecular' units of information are circulated outside of any coherent 'molar' narratives. And yet in order for profits to be accumulated in these contexts, it is imperative that certain norms are enforced. The logic and the law of commodification must be asserted with a historically unprecedented intensity in areas where it might be at risk, and must be extended into domains which it has either never governed, or from which it was excluded by the social-democratic victories of the twentieth century. As discussed in Chapter 2, the imposition of competitive individualist norms upon social scenes where they do not currently operate is often a fairly violent business, demanding authoritarian interventions and the ruthless application of Leviathan logic.

Consider the current state of the music industry, wherein music seems to be undergoing a radical de-commodification as musicians and traditional record companies find it increasingly difficult to generate profit from its sales, partly because of the willingness of millions of participants in a vast global network to exchange digital sound files without receiving any financial compensation. At one stage, at the beginning of the new millennium, this phenomenon seemed likely to threaten the very possibility of music culture remaining a viable site of capital accumulation at all. Instead what has actually happened is that key actors – such as Apple (through the iTunes store, the largest retailer of licensed digital downloads) and Spotify (a leading

music-streaming service) – have generated vast profits distributing commodities in whose production costs they have not had to invest, leaving them indifferent as to the content or individual profit-margins attached to particular units. What we see here is capital accumulation on a vast scale accruing from the constitution and facilitation of networked, decentralised relations, but also dependent upon the assertion of a wholly non-egalitarian relationship of exploitation upon the overall organisation of those relations and on their material outcomes, essentially by demanding that all transactions pass through a central location.[15]

It is worth stopping to consider just what a precarious situation capital would seem to be in here. It would be very easy for someone to establish, using much the same technology, a sort of co-operative version of iTunes which would share all profits amongst the producers and consumers of the content, or would develop some other method altogether for users to direct resources to producers. However, for this to happen, 'the multitude' would have to develop a conscious sense of this possibility of taking control of this domain of its culture, and would have to stop accepting the naturalness and inevitability of a culture organised on a capitalist model. I don't think it far-fetched to suggest that one reason why domains of social and cultural life such as education are increasingly, deliberately, aggressively commodified is that it is necessary, in order to avoid such catastrophes for capital, to consistently normalise an experience of the human life-world as persistently and ubiquitously commodified.

Even *within* such domains, consider the transformations that have happened to education in recent decades. The commodification and individualisation of education have themselves only occurred in the aftermath of the radical changes which progressive demands made possible in the 1960s and 1970s, and it has not been possible *wholly* to reverse those gains. Relations between teachers and taught are still far less authoritarian than they once were. The social make-up of universities has changed beyond all recognition. School and university curricula remain infinitely more radical than they were before the 1960s. In the United Kingdom, the youngest primary school children are still trained quite didactically in the values of cosmopolitan tolerance, egalitarianism ('everyone is good at something') and anti-individualism ('sharing is caring').[16] The neoliberalisation of education

– both its commodification and the imposition of rigid competitive regimes based on standardised testing – is surely in part a response to the threat posed by these changes, which, if allowed to reach their logical conclusion, would have resulted in a true democratisation of this entire social domain.

The picture which emerges here is a complex one. It suggests once again that, as Hardt and Negri insist, it is indeed the creative activity of the multitude which is the most potent force in driving cultural change, and that the profitability of capital is largely dependent upon facilitating and enabling that creativity; but that at the same time, capital must enforce the logic of individualisation and vertical authority at key strategic junctures if it is to remain both profitable and hegemonic, capturing and commodifying the outputs of these creative relations before they can crystallise in other forms. The result is the very strange mixture of egalitarianism and elitism, authoritarianism and libertarianism, individualism and pro-network communitarianism which characterises twenty-first century culture and the general condition of 'post-democracy'. In fact this picture would not be at all unfamiliar to Deleuze and Guattari, who consistently understand the logic of capitalism in terms of its double tendency to 'deterritorialise' and then 'reterritorialise' social relations, and for whom the key function of the state is as an 'apparatus of capture' for those flows of energy, ideas, people and things which capitalism necessarily sets in motion (Deleuze and Guattari 1988). The picture we have developed here of contemporary power mechanisms also looks very like that which Deleuze gestures towards in his 'Postscript on Control Societies' (1995), wherein classical forms of disciplinary power (Foucault 1977) give way to subtler and more intricate mechanisms for the pre-emptive regulation of human behaviour.

This in turn enables us to say something significant about what is at stake in the current crisis of political democracy. The prevalent model of representative liberal democracy has not been significantly revised in most countries since the introduction of full adult suffrage in the early twentieth century, an era when, in Foucault's terms, 'disciplinary logic' obtained within industry as well as in state institutions. 'Discipline', as described by Foucault (1977), deploys a logic which is actually very similar to Leviathan logic in its abstract form, individualising populations while centralising authority and greatly enhancing

its power to supervise and regulate the behaviour of its subjects. The development of 'disciplinary' institutions in the modern epoch – from prisons to mental institutions to factories – is associated with the growth of large-scale populations and their management, particularly through the imposition of normalising mechanisms which define standards of behaviour – thereby exercising a largely homogenising effect, while also treating each member of a population as a specific individual rather than a member of a community or group. We have already discussed in Chapter 1 how the shift from a disciplinary and Fordist society has problematised the efficacy of essentially Fordist democratic institutions, and have suggested that the only way beyond this impasse is to develop new and more participatory democratic forms.

What we can draw from our discussion of different ideas of group formation is a deeper sense of what might be at stake in the struggle for such forms. In particular, it becomes possible to see how a certain meta-individualist logic continues to inform existing democratic forms, assuming as it does that the communities of interest and opinion represented by political parties will be sufficiently static and homogeneous to be capable of being effectively represented by a single organisation and a single set of professional representatives over a sustained period of time without further consultation or deliberation among the represented. From this perspective it becomes particularly relevant to note the ways in which the post-democratic professionalisation of politics often works to weaken even those mechanisms of deliberation and accountability which mainstream political parties already possess. In the United Kingdom, for example, the project to construct 'New Labour' was organisationally dependent upon a deliberate strategy of bypassing and neutralising the traditional structures of Labour Party democracy. Most notably, the hugely symbolic gesture whereby the party finally dropped its historic commitment to socialism – as enshrined in the emblematic 'Clause 4' of the party's constitution, declaring common ownership of the means of production to be the party's historic goal – was the outcome of a 'democratic' process which permitted the party membership almost no deliberative input into the formulation of a new statement of aims and values for the party, the adoption of which was not subject to a normal vote by the party conference. Instead a new statement was presented for members to accept or reject in a plebiscite-style postal ballot,

with the party leadership able to communicate its position directly to members through their access to mass media, effectively addressing each member purely as an individual rather than as a member of a local party, while insisting upon an outcome which was more or less entirely determined from the centre. It is no surprise that New Labour in power became the paradigmatic example of advanced neoliberal governance.

Community and Commons

So the question is, what forms of opposition to neoliberal hegemony, or to post-Fordist capitalism, or to post-democracy, or even to 'societies of control', might make viable the realisation of radically democratic goals, and what light can this analysis shed on them? The first answer to this question is surely to assert that what these forms of opposition must share is a commitment to finding ways of material, political and institutional expression of the creative potential inherent in social relations which will resist the neoliberal imposition of an individualising, commodifying 'grid' upon those relations. In particular, those engaged in such opposition must argue for the value of co-operative and egalitarian relations in many social contexts – from schools to banks to broadcasters. Arguably this has always been the aim of the radical tradition, but it was certainly a key aspiration of the 'New Lefts' of the 1960s, for whom a deepening and extending of democratic relations was the most persistently unifying and explicit objective (see Chapter 1). The question remains now as to where we might find both more concrete ideas about what such institutions might look like and also conceptual resources with which to solve some of the problems which an idea such as 'participatory democracy' necessarily raises: in particular the question of how, within the purview of such an ideal, actual political and social decisions might get made. This is a subject we shall return to in Chapter 7.

At the same time, the logic of the argument presented here must lead us to the view that it will never be sufficient to oppose neoliberal individualism with a simple appeal to homogenising or conservative ideas of collectivity. Such appeals have been very common and politically very powerful throughout the period of neoliberalism's rise. That epoch has seen the emergence of a number of new forms of political conservatism which have rejected both the radical

democratic demands of the 1960s and 1970s – feminist demands in particular – and neoliberal individualism, reacting to the complexities of postmodern culture by asserting an ideal of cultural homogeneity: American evangelical conservatism, several forms of Islamism, Hindutva, and so on. At the same time the 1980s saw many of those radical demands reworked in the language of 'identity politics', which at times seemed itself to depend upon a reductive idea of political collectivities – 'women', 'gay people', etc. – as effectively homogeneous. Perhaps most importantly, however – at least for contemporary politics in the English-speaking world – the way in which dissatisfaction with neoliberalism and its social effects has most frequently been expressed within mainstream political discourse has been through the direct appeal to poorly defined notions of 'community': either national community or local community (or both, with the relationship between them being an obvious and frequent point of tension).

In the United Kingdom, for example, it is notable that ever since the era of Thatcherism, opposition parties, whether from the Right or the Left, have almost invariably made some promise to restore an apparently lost sense of community to British public life. Indeed even Thatcher's Conservative successor as prime minister, John Major, felt the need after his general election victory of 1992 to promise to restore a lost sense of national togetherness.[17] Between 1994 and 1997 a number of key 'communitarian' thinkers were widely reported as key influences on Tony Blair's thinking: from the Scottish Hegelian philosopher John MacMurray[18] to the guru of American communitarianism Amitai Etzioni (1993, 2000). By the time of Blair's second term as prime minister, however, it was clear that neoliberal individualism had become the key ideological framework informing government policy (Leys 2001, Finlayson 2003). This pattern was repeated almost precisely when David Cameron made his idea of the 'Big Society' – a vague and little-understood appeal to the ideal of voluntary self-organisation as preferable to either naked individualism or state-reliance in the solving of social problems – central to the Conservative party's successful election campaign in 2008 (Norman 2010, Cruddas and Rutherford 2008). Cameron retained in government only those elements of this agenda which could be used to justify massive cuts in public spending. What this history suggests is both that opposition parties under neoliberalism must always appeal to some sense of

community or collectivity – because the lack of it is the most obviously negative and widely regretted feature of neoliberal culture, even among populations who seem to do little actively to resist it – and that in practice post-democratic governments are very unlikely to implement any seriously communitarian or collectivist measures as long as neoliberalism remains globally hegemonic.

At the time of writing (July 2013), this historical pattern shows every sign of repeating itself. The recent strategy of the Labour leadership and several senior survivors of the Blair government has been to make a defensive communitarianism far more decisively and unambiguously central to their agenda than was ever the case in the 1990s, borrowing a slogan ('One Nation') from the Victorian Conservative prime minister Benjamin Disraeli and making an explicit virtue of its deliberate conservatism.[19] What is most notable about the process leading to this position has been the influence of a number of themes and practices drawn from the tradition of 'community organising'[20] which has developed in American cities over several decades, producing the organisational context within which Barack Obama began his political career, one variant of which has informed the considerable success of the organisation Citizens UK and its London-based predecessors[21] which have been largely responsible for raising wages for large numbers of the poorest-paid workers through its ongoing campaign for a 'Living Wage'. It is not surprising that many people should have been impressed by this set of achievements, but it is also notable that Citizens UK relies upon a model of community organising which manifests all of the problems which thinkers in the radical tradition have tended to identify with the concept of 'community'. It tends to rely on mobilising highly stable and culturally homogeneous groups – particularly those defined by a shared religious identity, which in practice usually means a shared ethnic and ideological identity – and it explicitly works through the identification, cultivation and mobilisation of 'community leaders' rather than involving entire collectives in decision making, except at occasional large (and largely symbolic) rallies. It should be clear from the foregoing discussion why this might be considered problematic, and it is notable that a critique of the idea of 'community' runs through the work of a number of thinkers who might be drawn upon to support the critique of meta-individualism that I have made here (Nancy 1991, Derrida and Caputo

1997: 106–8). For all such commentators, the danger of the idea of 'community' is that it too often implies a form of collectivity which is dependent upon a shared, but static and homogeneous identity, and that it is often evoked in order to neutralise any possible criticism of the power relations obtaining *within* 'communities'. The question which follows is whether there is an alternative to the language of 'community' with which neoliberal individualism might be opposed from a radically democratic perspective.

One set of ideas, terms and associated practices has indeed emerged in recent years which is oriented towards precisely this goal. This is the language of 'the commons', which makes an evocative comparison between contemporary struggles over various kinds of shared resource and the history of capitalism in its key formative phase. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, but most notably during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, land which had previously been regarded as being the 'common' property of local communities, and land which had been used by peasant families according to long-established customs, was legally redefined as being the private property of members of the local landowning class, with the authority of the parliamentary 'acts of enclosure' (Polanyi 1944, Neeson 1993). Various commentators – in particular some drawing inspiration from the autonomist tradition – have observed the similarity between acts of enclosure and the neoliberal programme of privatising public assets and enforcing the implementation of market relations across various social domains (Midnight Notes 1990, Gilbert 2007). The current leftist usage of the term 'commons' actually owes something to a classic *neoliberal* use of that term by the right-wing ecologist Garret Hardin. Hardin's essay 'The Tragedy of the Commons' (1968) argued that any set of resources which are supposedly owned in common will inevitably be depleted beyond repair by the tendency of individuals privately to abuse them. Taking issue with Hardin and his followers, the economist Elinor Ostrom argued that both theoretically (even when using the kind of concepts derived from game theory and public choice theory beloved of neoliberal ideologues) and practically, there was no sound basis for this claim. Usefully for our argument, Ostrom's major work, *Governing the Commons* (1990), refutes not only this claim, but also the explicit argument made by some of Hardin's followers that 'Leviathan' (i.e. arbitrary centralised state power) was 'the only way'

to avoid this tragedy, instead arguing that the collective co-operative management of the shared socio-ecological resources which she called, after Hardin, the 'commons' was both possible and a lived reality in many local contexts (Ostrom 1990).

Today, as the drive to privatise shared and public resources has become clearly the dominant characteristic of neoliberal policy in action, the meaning of the term 'commons' has shifted somewhat so as to emphasise what is at stake in this dynamic. Radical economist Massimo de Angelis thus defines 'commons' simply as 'social spheres of life the main characteristics of which are to provide various degrees of protection from the market' (De Angelis 2007: 145), and it is important to note that the term can be applied both to existing spheres and institutions – whether these be traditional and ancient, or modern creations of the welfare state – and to new types of shared resources, such as the vast aggregations of free information available on the World Wide Web (Bauwens 2005). What is particularly useful about the idea of the commons as distinct from the idea of community is that it does not depend upon any presumption that the participants in a commons will be bound together by a shared identity or a homogeneous culture. Rather, they will be related primarily by their shared interest in defending or producing a set of common resources, and this shared interest is likely to be the basis for an egalitarian and potentially democratic set of social relationships.

A term closely related to 'commons' but rather more abstract in its implications is 'the common'. Hardt and Negri use this term to designate that shared set of capacities, disposition, affects and interests which is the basis of the multitude's creative potential, of which 'the commons' is always a material and partially institutional expression.

> The term *community* is often used to refer to a moral unity that stands above the population and its interactions like a sovereign power. The common does not refer to traditional notions of either the community or the public; it is based on the *communication* among singularities and emerges through the collaborative social process of production. (2004: 204)

> Revolts mobilize the common in two respects, increasing the intensity of each struggle and extending other struggles. Intensively,

> internal to each local struggle, the common antagonism and common wealth of the exploited and appropriated are translated into common conducts, habits and performativity ... Jean Genet, for example, remarked that what characterised the black panthers was primarily *style* – not just the vocabulary, the Afros, and the clothes, but also a way of walking, a manner of holding their bodies, a physical presence ...
>
> Extensively, the common is mobilized in communication from one local struggle to another. (2004: 212–13)

A central feature of Hardt and Negri's idea of the common is that this term names precisely that which contemporary capitalism works by claiming, capturing and commodifying:

> [W]e must try to conceive exploitation as *the expropriation of the common*. The common, in other words, has become the locus of surplus value. Exploitation is the private appropriation of part or all of the relationships that have been produced in common ...Think, for example, of the profit extracted from affective labour. The same is true for the production of languages, ideas and knowledges: what is made in common becomes private. This is true, for example, when traditional knowledges produced in indigenous communities or when the knowledge produced collaboratively in scientific communities becomes private property. (2004: 150–1)

We could add that it is equally true when students and teachers collaborate in the production of an 'education' (which is to say, a general increase in the capacities of the student), or when patients and carers collaborate in order to enhance the 'health' of the patient (which is a general increase in the capacities of the patient), all of which are types of relationship which neoliberalism works actively to deterritorialise so that they can be reterritorialised in the form of retail transactions between private and competing sets of interests.

Hardt and Negri do not see *every* productive capacity of our common life as always already captured by the capitalist machine, however. In fact they argue that there is a dimension of the common which can itself never be wholly captured and commodified, and that it is this 'surplus'[22] which is the basis for all transductions of mere antagonism into actual

revolt – it is the 'wealth, that is, a surplus of intelligence, experience, knowledge and desire' which informs all real attempts at political transformation. Cesare Casarino offers a fascinating exposition and revision of this concept, naming this form of revolutionary 'wealth' as 'surplus common' and exploring its relationship to Marx's notion of surplus value.

> Surplus is potentiality qua potentiality … The point is that *there is only one surplus*, which may effect and be effected in different ways. On the one hand, surplus is that which capital strives to subsume absolutely under surplus value and yet manages to do so only relatively because it is structurally unable to subsume without at the same time negating and foreclosing that which it subsumes – thereby enabling the emergence of surplus common. On the other hand, surplus is that which envelops and subsists in the common as surplus common, that is as the common's distinct yet indiscernible element of potentiality, and hence also as the condition of possibility of all the common's fully exploitable and subsumable actual elements – thereby enabling the emergence of surplus value. (Casarino and Negri 2008: 22)

The common, then, can be understood as that domain of creative potential which is constituted by, and constitutive of, sociality as such. In this sense, there is an obvious relationship between the idea of the common and Simondon's concepts of the preindividual and transindividual, and this is something that our discussion in this chapter can add to the idea of the common. The common can be understood as being composed of both preindividual and transindividual elements, being at once a resource and a field of potentiality generated by pre-existing relations, and the ongoing product of the activity enabled by those relations in the present. In fact we might suggest that the common emerges precisely at the point where the preindividual becomes the transindividual, where the potentiality inherent in the sociality of social relations becomes the real creative potential of those relations as they are enacted and actualised in the present. This is a useful formulation particularly to the extent that we follow Simondon in understanding all individuation as emerging from the preindividual and in the context of the transindividual. As such, to preserve and

build commons – political and material instantiations of the common – is always to preserve and build the conditions of possibility for unpredictable future individuations.

This may sound wholly abstract, but its implication is not, that implication being that political and social institutions should be judged at least partly in terms of their creativity, which is to say in terms of the extent to which they facilitate the expression of that creative potential which is implicit in any set of social relations. How far do schools enable collaborations between students and teachers to develop new and innovative forms of learning and knowledge? How far do clinics enable patients and doctors to find innovative ways of improving public health?[23] How far do broadcasters and other cultural institutions enable genuinely new ways of thinking and feeling to emerge? These would be the criteria for judging political institutions according to this logic: as opposed to the neoliberal managerialist demand that such institutions be judged in terms of their ability to meet a predetermined set of 'targets', or the conservative communitarian demand that they enable given communities merely to remain exactly what they already are, these democratic criteria would ask how far they enable any given collectivity to explore its own potential. To use a slightly different, but closely related vocabulary, we could follow Jean-Luc Nancy's remarks on what a truly 'political' community would look like. '"Political" would mean a community ordering itself to the unworking of its communication, or destined to this unworking: a community consciously undergoing the experience of its sharing' (Nancy 1991: 40).

In case this should sound like an argument for a sort of wild futurism, insisting that every public institution embrace an ostentatiously avant-garde mission of its own, let me be clear that this is not the point at all. The point rather is that the logic of our argument thus far must lead to the conclusion that any truly democratic institution would necessarily facilitate the expression of this creative potential which inheres in all social relationships. What's more, it is certainly possible to point to numerous examples of actual policies informed by this kind of thinking. A key term in recent social-policy debates, which has its origins in the work of Elinor Ostrom (1996), is 'co-production'. This term designates an approach to public-service management which recognises that services are not merely 'delivered' by 'producers'

to 'users' (or 'customers'), which is a standard assumption of the 'new public management', instead recognising that service outcomes are the product of collaborative and creative relationships between professionals and members of the wider public. From this perspective, the health of a patient or the education of a student are outcomes which must be *co-produced* by all participants in the process, which by definition cannot be made to follow a wholly preordained path, or be modelled as a retail transaction, without the productivity of that process being vastly impaired. This is an idea which should entail the creation of institutional practices and decision-making procedures which involve all participants in the management of a service in ongoing dialogue and real decision making, and there are many examples of such institutions working in practice around the world – from the movement in the United Kingdom to create effective school councils, and to defend local democratic control of education policy (Gannon and Lawson 2008), to the success of 'Nurse–Family Partnership' programmes in the United States (Boyle and Harris 2009). Along with practices like participatory budgeting (see Chapter 1), such innovations demonstrate the real possibility for a concrete politics of the common[24] that is not dependent upon the revolutionary utopianism which seems to inform Hardt and Negri's political vision, although it need not be inimical to it either.

Such democratic, non-bureaucratic innovations are not a new idea of course. Arguably they have their roots in the earliest history of the workers' movement, in which self-organised institutions – co-operatives, mutual societies, educational associations, sports clubs, and many others – played a huge role prior to the formation of the welfare state (Curl 2009). The desire for collective decision making and egalitarian democracy has not, however, been confined merely to the management and delivery of public services and governmental institutions. A key radical aspiration since the nineteenth century has been for decision making and egalitarian relations in the workplace – from the earliest co-operatives to the local associations of the Paris Commune, from the workers soviets of revolutionary Russia to the late-twentieth century experiments in 'workers' self-management' (Petras and Veltmeyer 2006): '*autogestion*'. In recent years this is an idea which has seen a considerable revival, from the success of the Argentinian factory occupations following the 2001 economic crisis

(Magnani 2009) to the advocacy of mutualism and employee share-ownership by British Conservative politicians in the run-up to the 2010 general election (Norman 2010). Clearly any radical democratic politics of the common must activate something of this tradition, but it must also bear in mind Félix Guattari's comments on *autogestion* in the 1970s, to the effect that such a politics can only be effective if it rids itself of the particularistic tendency to be exclusively focussed on one workplace or one locality:

> Self-management [*autogestion*] can be neither anti-management nor a 'democratic' modification of central planning, as currently conceived by the Left. Before being economic, it will have to address the very texture of the socius, through the promotion of a new type of relationship between things, signs and modes of collective subjectivation ... Self-management can only result from a continuous process of collective experiment which – even while always taking things forward in terms of the detail of life and respect for singularities of desire – is for all that no less able, step by step, to carry out 'rationally' the essential tasks of co-ordination at larger social scales. (Guattari 2011: 145–6)

It is such a process of collective self-experiment which can be the only meaningful response to the crisis of representative democracy. Practical examples such as the ones given above show that such experiments are possible, and it is precisely their proliferation and intensification which any politics informed by the argument made here would aim at, rather than the sterile production of ideal models. However, what many of the advocates of policies such as 'co-production' seem reluctant to address is the fact that such policies are not going to be successfully implemented simply on the grounds that they are reasonable and benign. The entire project of neoliberalism is to inhibit the success of such interventions, to destabilise the terrain upon which they might develop and to prevent the formation of the kinds of collectivity which might be able to enact them successfully. Any politics of the common must therefore be something more than an aspiration for egalitarian social relations: it must be prepared to take on the forces which oppose that aspiration in the defence and promotion of their own interest. At the same time, Guattari here reminds us of several crucial and

interrelated issues to which any such political project must attend: how to mobilise politically and effectively at the levels of affectivity and of the 'relationship between things, signs and modes of collective subjectivation', and how to co-ordinate different sets of desires and demands. These will be the subjects of the next chapter.

7

On the Impossibility of Making Decisions: Affect, Agency and the Democratic Sublime

Decisions, Decisions…

The picture which emerges from our argument thus far, of humans caught up in, and constituted by, a complex and infinite web of interrelations, raises a crucial question for any theorisation of democracy: how is it, under these conditions, that any kind of agency can be exercised? One way of addressing this question is through a key interest of Derrida's, which is also relevant to any notion of democracy: the philosophical nature of *decision*. We have already suggested in Chapter 1 that the minimal definition of 'democracy' is 'collective decision making'. For Derrida, the decision is a classically paradoxical event: it must come about as the result of a potentially interminable deliberation, and yet it must represent the termination of that deliberation; it must, as far as the decider knows, be the best possible decision, and yet the decider cannot *know* that it is the best possible decision, otherwise it is not a 'decision' at all, but simply an action in accordance with certain knowledge of the outcome. It is only because of the undecidability of a situation that we must decide. 'A decision can only come into being in a space that exceeds the calculable programme of determinate causes. There can be no moral or political responsibility without this trial and this passage by way of the undecidable' (Derrida

1988: 116). As a result, there is always a certain arbitrariness to the moment of decision, even, following Kirkegaard, a certain 'madness' (Derrida 1995: 65): every decision is a leap of faith, a jump across the void between a general condition of possibility and an actualised intention. And this is indeed the same gap which for Laclau defines subjectivity as such: 'the subject is nothing but this gap between the undecidable structure and the decision' (Laclau 1990: 30). If we recast these remarks in Simondon's terms, then we can understand decision as a definitive event of individuation: like any other individuation, it can be thought of as never having been completed, to the extent that there will never be an absolutely final decision. This is not to say that all decisions are reversible; the reversibility of a decision will depend entirely upon the extent to which a decision does or does not introduce a permanent phase change into a system.

These accounts of the nature of the decision have two implications for the theorisation of democracy. One is that democracy can be understood as a process of *collective individuation*, which is precisely the formula recently offered by Bernard Stiegler (Crépon and Stiegler 2007). The other is that democracy must involve an ongoing attempt to expand and proliferate the possibilities for multiple collective individuations to occur. In the essay which we have just cited, his seminal 'New Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time', Laclau argues that an even more fundamental category than 'antagonism' in understanding the constitution of the social is 'dislocation'. 'Dislocation' is a concept closely related to Derrida's *différance* and very close in meaning to Deleuze and Guattari's 'deterritorialisation'. It is a concept which designates the necessary non-fixity which characterises any apparently stable structure; the degree of dislocation of a given social structure is what determines the level of subjective freedom and therefore the potential for democracy in a given situation. 'Subject equals the pure form of the structure's dislocation, or its ineradicable difference from itself' (Laclau 1990: 60). Laclau is clear that this means that the more a social structure is dislocated, the more subjective freedom there is; he is much less clear as to whether this freedom applies to groups as well as to individual subjects, or about what the implication might be within his framework of understanding democracy not merely as a maximisation of contingency, but also as a positive constitution of collective capacities for decision. However, we may elaborate from his

argument, and from his remark in the preface to the same volume that he is committed to a politics of 'the multiplication of public spaces' (Laclau 1990: xv), to suggest that one of the hallmarks of any radical democracy will be the expansion and multiplication of those domains within which collective decisions may be taken about social, cultural or material outcomes. For example, we can consider the socialisation of health care as a policy whose purpose is not merely to protect the weak but also, potentially, to expand into the domain of health and health care the power of the collective to decide what it wants to happen – who gets what health care when – instead of leaving this decision to the unaccountable 'market', or 'nature', or God. We might make this formulation even more abstract, but potentially even more useful, by extending Laclau's argument to say that the expansion of democracy is simply an expansion of *possibility in general*.

There is a potential problem here, however, insofar as the ideas of freedom, agency and democracy implied by these arguments still seem to carry with them a distinct trace of individualism, especially insofar as Laclau discusses agency solely in terms of the freedom of 'the Subject'. If, as we have suggested, a truly non-individualistic conception of the collective cannot merely understand it as a sort of meta-individuality, then the question remains as to what exactly a non-individualistic conception of agency and decision would look like. One fascinating answer to this question is offered by Simon Critchley's reading of Derrida's remark that '[t]he passive decision, condition of the event, is always in me, structurally, another event, a rending decision as the decision of the other. Of the absolute other in me, the other as the absolute that decides on me in me' (Derrida 1997: 68). Critchley interprets this remark to imply that '*It is the demand provoked by the other's decision in me that calls forth political invention, that provokes me into inventing a norm and taking a decision*' (1999: 277, emphasis original). The sense here that a decision is never wholly active or passive clearly evokes Arendt's description of the conditions of 'boundless action'.

It seems that what Derrida and Critchley are trying to express is an aspect of human experience which is banally familiar to everyone, but which the liberal tradition, and every political and philosophical tradition based on the meta-individualist conception of sovereignty, can never take account of: this is the fact that decisions are taken, that

interventions are made, even when we can never be entirely sure, in a rational and self-present way, why those decisions are taken, or what the consequences of those actions might be. Agency exists, freedom is real, but they are not exercised by 'individuals' or even, very often, by 'subjects': rather they are names for the fluctuating possibilities which are produced or suppressed by the shifting relations between singularities, persons, brains, ideas, affects, and so on. Decisions are taken, or rather they *emerge*, but they are not, as the liberal imagination presumes, the actions of individuals or of meta-individual institutions: rather, they occur in the interstices between bodies and between conscious intentions. I think this is precisely what Critchley means by '*hetero-affectivity* prior to any auto-affection and disturbing any simple claim to autonomy'.

This sounds very abstract, I realise, so I will offer some examples and illustrations to try to clarify the picture. As mentioned in an endnote in Chapter 4, the ex-Thatcherite, ex-Blairite English philosopher John Gray has in recent years developed an anti-political philosophy which proceeds from an appreciation of the inherent complexity of social relations as described by Arendt to the sceptical claim that the law of unintended consequences will undermine every political project, and that there is therefore probably no point in engaging in politics at all. However, a very different conclusion can be drawn from a recognition of the implications of social complexity, if we do away with the liberal individualist conception of agency, decision and intentionality against which Gray measures the complex reality of actual sociality and finds it wanting. So, let us consider this question of unintended consequences with regard to some recent geopolitical history. February 2003 saw a global day of protest against the imminent American invasion of Iraq – including a million-strong demonstration on the streets of London – the precise timing of which had been agreed at the first European Social Forum in Firenze (Florence) in November 2002. Although the protests entirely failed to achieve their aim, it can be reasonably speculated that they played a role in weakening the global legitimacy of the Bush administration's imperialist adventures. Two key consequences followed from this. One was the election in 2008 of the only prominent candidate for the US presidency who had publicly opposed the war. Another, perhaps, was that for the first time since the 1950s (and arguably since the 1850s), the United States was

not in a position to intervene to prevent the election and success of socialist governments in Latin America. This is a speculative claim that can never be proved or disproved; but is it really possible to imagine the United States tolerating the success of Chavez, Morales, even Lula in the early years of the twenty-first century if it had not had its international legitimacy so fatally compromised by the disaster in Iraq? Of course I am not claiming for a moment that the forum and the protests were anything but small parts of a much larger ensemble of elements producing these outcomes, including most notably the end of the Cold War, which for decades had provided an alibi for US intervention in Latin America:[1] but they were active elements of those ensembles, nonetheless.

The remarkable point here is that the actual positive consequences of that forum and its activities were not at all those intended by the participants; but nonetheless, they were most certainly outcomes that they would have *desired*. Or rather, they were consequences of the productive desire produced by the assemblage of the forum and the demonstrations. Importantly, just as the intentions informing these actions and outcomes were semi-conscious at most, so the political effects which they produced were more about the constitution of a general mood, a 'climate of opinion', whose consequence was to inhibit the US government's capacity to act even though the Bush administration never publicly recanted its ideological commitment to neoconservative, neo-imperialist foreign policy or the Monroe doctrine. In other words, this was politics conducted and agency exercised at the level of transindividual affect, in a way which cannot be conceptualised in individualist terms. This is an example of agency operating on an affective, transindividual, plane on a very large scale. However, there is also good reason for arguing that this is exactly how agency and decision function at the level of the single human body. Brain-scanning increasingly suggests that decisions are not made primarily in those parts of the brain associated with conscious intention, but are a product of the creative multiplicity which is each body–brain system in a complex interaction between its constituent elements, memories, somatic and unconscious processes, and myriad environmental stimuli (Protevi 2009: 3–57, Brooks 2011).[2]

The case of the anti-war movement is a good example of agency being exercised – even of, in some sense, decisions emerging – in a

transversal, non-individualist, 'horizontalist' fashion. But the question which it raises is this: to what extent can such situations be positively engineered, and to what extent could permanent institutions be established which aimed to engender the same kinds of effects? The most obvious answer is that we have already seen one example in practice. The most significant concrete attempt to date to produce a truly international and horizontal political form has been the social-forum movement. While it is itself a necessarily contested concept, and while it may have been somewhat eclipsed more recently by the new wave of radical democratic campaigns which have emerged since the financial crisis of 2008, the abstract idea of the 'social forum' remains an ideal reversal of the priorities and methods of neoliberalism. Hannah Arendt once commented that there were two types of public space: the forum – where open deliberation leads to collective decision – and the market, where open competition leads to private consumption (1958: 160). If the twin imperatives of neoliberalism are the reduction of all relationships to those of the market place and the reduction of all social situations to a condition of disaggregated individualisation, then the production of 'social forums' – or of 'occupations' or 'public assemblies' which share all of their characteristics – can be understood as the most basic and necessary form of resistance to this process (Gilbert 2005). It is surely significant that the rise of the social-forum form has been indissociable from a widespread emphasis in the anti-neoliberal movement on the importance of horizontality as a guiding principle of organisation, decision making and inclusion. Indeed, at a certain level of abstraction, the 'social forum' might be taken as the ideal form of all deliberate attempts to resist the anti-democratic imperatives of neoliberalism. In this sense, existing legislatures, or television programmes, or web sites, or musical subcultures, or university courses might see themselves as 'social forums' to the extent that they deliberately attempt to constitute spaces within which horizontal social relations can be promoted and the irreducible sociality of human existence can be acknowledged, in direct resistance to the commodifying and alienating logic of the market (George 2004).

Of course, the theory, rhetoric and practice of horizontality does not begin and end with the social-forum movement, and it is worth considering now both some of the other sites of its emergence and some of the political problems that they have encountered. In recent years,

the theme of horizontality which we have explored in some detail has been most closely associated with a series of movements and struggles beginning with protests against the World Trade Organisation's neoliberal agenda in the 1990s (Gilbert 2008b, Tormey 2004, Notes From Nowhere 2003). Many of the groups involved in these activities have made a strong effort to practise forms of self-organisation and collective decision making which deliberately eschew any form of hierarchy, or any demand for homogeneity among their constituent members, and which avoid the limitations imposed by traditional forms of representation and federation (Day 2005, Maeckelbergh 2009). Activist groups are typically organised on the basis of open meetings wherein all participants are given equal rights to speak and a range of techniques is employed (such as the use of hand signals rather than vocal interjection to indicate spontaneous agreement or disagreement) in order to facilitate equal participation. A strong, although not universal, tendency has been to prefer 'consensus' decision making to simple voting on issues. This is easily misunderstood as expressing a naive aspiration for ultimate unity. While that may sometimes be the significance of the 'consensus' model, more often the ideal of consensus is used in order to ensure that deliberative processes are as exhaustive as possible; and it is important to note that 'consensus' does not always indicate agreement, but rather a common understanding of what the terms of disagreement are – even where these are fundamental and incompatible – and what their implications will be for the subgroups following different positions (Maeckelbergh 2009: 99–101).

The idea of constituting 'prefigurative' spaces of democratic engagement has been of critical importance to radical movements since the early days of the New Lefts (Miller 1987, Polletta 2002: 6–8), and arguably for much longer.[3] As discussed in Chapter 1, one of the characteristic features of recent radical movements has been the move to place the constitution of such spaces at the very heart of their practice, sometimes to the exclusion of any determinate aim beyond the initiation and conduct of a process of open democratic deliberation. The World Social Forum inspired the worldwide movement to constitute national, regional and local social forums in many parts of the world in the early years of the twenty-first century, inspired by the WSF's core principles of inclusive and participatory engagement in opposition to neoliberal hegemony (Sen and Waterman 2012).

In practice, a social forum on any scale is little more than a regular conference, attended by a cross section of activists from multiple campaigns, trade unionists, activists from left-wing parties, students and academics. However, it is one the very existence of which attests to the possibility of collective self-organisation, participatory decision making and horizontal social relations: precisely the possibility which neoliberal post-democracy tries endlessly to deny. Although for many of its participants and ideologues, there was always a clear distinction between the social forums – conceived as independent democratic spaces – and the movements which they brought together, this is much less true of the more recent movement which followed in the wake of the 'Occupy Wall Street' protest, beginning in 2011. Although the 'Occupy' movement has a clear populist and strategic dimension, with its rhetorically impressive attempt to mobilise the poorest 99 per cent of the population against the wealthiest 1 per cent (Taylor 2011), it has been repeatedly accused of lacking clear demands or any concrete aim beyond holding public discussions, meetings, workshops and debates on the iniquity of contemporary capitalism. With a few exceptions (most notably the militant labour mobilisation associated with Occupy Oakland in 2012), it is hard to see that Occupy has done or even tried to do much more than this, despite the many hyperbolic claims made for its revolutionary status. And yet even in doing this, merely in opening up a set of possible sites for the collective individuation of new types of democratic assemblage, Occupy has arguably made a direct challenge to the hegemony of post-democratic neoliberalism (Graeber 2013). Of course, the question of how to turn such a challenge into an effective political strategy is not one that Occupy has so far been able to answer; but then this is a question which should doubtless be posed to many other much older, better organised, and better resourced groups before expecting the Occupy movement to be able to answer it.

Cultural Democracy

Before considering the implications of that question, it is worth reflecting on the issue of whether there are cultural as well as political forms which give particular expression to an ideal of horizontal, democratic social relations. For example, the promotion of an experience of genuinely shared, participatory, but non-conservative

culture has often been given as a motivation for those radical developments in processual and participative art which gave rise to the 'happenings' of the 1950s and 1960s, the history of which is more or less coterminous with that of the New Lefts. In the 1990s in the United Kingdom the key cultural form which became linked to radical protest politics was 'rave' (Gilbert and Pearson 1999). In part this was a contingent product of a specific political history: the same piece of legislation, the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, had criminalised outdoor raves, squatters and anti-hunting protesters in a general round-up of the residual enemies of late Thatcherism, despite the fact that just a few years earlier, large-scale outdoor raves had first been popularised in England by a group of young, right-wing, libertarian entrepreneurs (Collin and Godfrey 1997). The perceived radicalisation of rave was the outcome of two developments in the early 1990s. On the one hand, it was arguably the early activities of the radical ecological protest group Reclaim the Streets which cemented this connection in the public imagination, making large-scale illegal street raves their key symbolic tactic, although the theory and practice of the group owed as much to the history of performance art as to any organic links with dance-music culture (McKay 1996, 1998). On the other hand, the cultural proximity of Reclaim the Streets to rave culture was itself an outcome of the crossover between urban rave communities and those remnants of the British 'free festival' scene which had survived the violent suppression inflicted upon it by the Thatcher government in the 1980s (McKay 1996). What the festival culture – a direct survival of the counterculture of the late 1960s and early 1970s – shared even with the commercial raves of the late 1980s was a commitment to a radical conviviality, an energetic celebration of togetherness which also made a virtue of never suppressing the singularity of its participants into a homogenising identity category. Whether or not this was an empirical reality, it was certainly the case that what the explicit ideology of rave culture (as expressed by participants, journalists, event organisers, DJs and music producers) valorised in its radical moment (c.1989–1995) was an ideal of the socially mixed crowd interacting relatively spontaneously, with a minimal degree of hierarchy between 'performers' and 'audience': at this time, the identities of DJs and performers were rarely known, and it was generally assumed that the feedback loop between crowd

response and performer action was what drove musical performances, rather than any individual intentions of the performer. In fact this idea was not new even then. It can be traced back at least to the radical dance-party network of downtown New York in the 1970s and the 'contact culture' (promoting exchange and interaction amongst a range of social constituencies) which it promoted (Lawrence 2003, 2009), as well as to the ideals expressed by groups of improvising performers, from Sun Ra's Arkestra to the Grateful Dead (Gilbert 2004b). What all of these cultural forms have shared has been a commitment to the establishment and active celebration of democratic, horizontal social relations which seem to share much with the orientation of horizontalist political projects.

Looking back again to the 1970s, it is possible to see an even more important example of a decentralised, affective, collectivist politics in action: the late-twentieth-century women's movement. In some senses the women's movement in its most radical phase (c.1969–1985) stands as the ideal-typical example of a radical democratic movement, innovating new and prefigurative social models in order to challenge established hierarchies of power. While the disintegration of the Fordist assemblage thoroughly disoriented most of the traditional Left (Hall 1988), the movement was able to use the situation to mobilise a whole set of social demands predicated on the denormalisation of the gendered division of labour which Fordism had so strictly reinforced and the desire for a multiplicity of forms of life which could not be satisfied by any culture predicated on that division. In Laclau's terms, this was a classic example of social dislocation providing the opportunity for an expansion of freedom and the construction of a new social imaginary. At the same time, at the molecular level, it was surely the desire and the attempts of women themselves to escape the strictures of patriarchal Fordism that was one of the key 'lines of flight' which permanently destabilised that formation in the first place.[4] Having emerged with force in the early 1970s, the women's movement in most countries never cohered into a singular organisation with a coherent identity, but operated through decentralised networks of local groups and complex sets of federated and affiliated organisations, with the most famous form of organisation being the leaderless and mutually constituting 'consciousness-raising group', a nonspecific site for the general intensification of militancy and for an empowerment

that is at once collective and personal. Perhaps the most impressive feature of the movement, however, was simply the way in which it rendered visible, and made available for public discussion, a set of norms and power relationships which had remained so hegemonic as to be invisible, appearing to many constituencies as mere 'common sense', in some cases for generations (in a term borrowed by Laclau from Husserl it 'de-sedimented' them (Laclau 1990, Butler 1993)). A 'cultural' as much as a 'political' movement, pursuing a politics that was as much 'affective' as symbolic or economic, the feminism of this era ultimately effected a permanent change in those norms, transforming an entire culture almost beyond recognition.

Affect, Empowerment and Joy

One highly contested term which the women's movement has helped to popularise in many political contexts is 'empowerment'. The contest over its meaning is often between the more traditional notion of conferring material or institutional autonomy on women, and a more diffuse notion of generally improving women's individual or collective self-confidence. It is easy to dismiss the latter as a vague and insubstantial notion, and it is certainly true that it is all too easily translated into a neoliberal notion of 'personal choice' as a substitute for any meaningful social or political engagement (Dubriwny 2013). However, we should not dismiss it too quickly, because it is also clearly used to try to describe a dimension of political engagement which is much the same as that contained in the concept of affect. Affect, we recall, is always a function of the augmentation or diminution of a body's capacity to act, and the extent to which a given organisation, innovation, institution or campaign actually enhances the active capacities of its constituent elements is, as we have already suggested, a very good way of judging its effectiveness.

In fact the Spinozan understanding of affect offers us a uniquely useful perspective from which to think about the democratic potential not just of strictly 'political' formations, but also of 'cultural' or even 'artistic' ones, particularly insofar as it constitutes the basis for a very different idea of pleasure, happiness and joy to that which informs both the liberal tradition and psychoanalysis. In the latter cases, pleasure is traditionally conceived as the satisfaction of needs or desires, which

are always understood as experiences of *lack*. This is just as true in Hobbes and Locke as it is in Freud.[5]

Spinoza's conception of pleasure as the experience of the augmentation of the body's capacity to act – and pain as the diminution of that capacity – is quite different in its implications, and applicable across a vast range of experiences. From this perspective, the experience of pleasure is not merely the experience of some predetermined need being fulfilled, the temporary restoration of a static state of 'wholeness' or neutral contentment; rather, pleasure simply is the name that we give to the experience of an enhancement of our capacities (however, specific, subtle, or temporary). To illustrate this idea, just think of the ways in which music facilitates dancing or contemplation, or consider the experience of the 'runner's high', or even of ordinary sexual arousal. To extend this model into the understanding of more passive or aesthetic pleasures is a little more complicated, but it can be done. Even the apparently most passive and physically risky pleasures – the flavours of 'unhealthy' food and drink, opiate intoxication – can be understood in these terms if considered carefully. The pleasure we derive from consuming sugar or salt or even alcohol are partly a neurological response to the fact that they are highly beneficial in moderate quantities, literally improving the body's functional ability; the pleasurable effects of opiates or cocaine are a direct extension of their anaesthetic capacity to enable the body to withstand great strains. The misuse and overuse of all such substances is only ever due to a miscalculation as to what level of intensity can be pursued without provoking a debilitating physical counter-response, as philosophers at least since Epicurus have told us.

A key concept here is John Protevi's notion of 'joyous affect', which he defines as that which increases the potential power of bodies, enabling them 'to form new and potentially empowering encounters' (2009: 51). On a molecular scale, each of these examples can be understood in these terms. The experience of even the most physically costly and lethal of pleasures, such as the anaesthetic stimulants and analgesics, is a complex admixture of genuine pleasure, as the capacity is facilitated for various kinds of connection (sexual, tactile, imaginary, spiritual, and so on) with other elements of the world, and reactive pain, as such connections prove unsustainable or become more difficult and less tolerable than normal. The political implications of

this idea are very significant, for it implies that in some sense all joy, all pleasure, is precisely an experience of sociality-as-empowerment.[6] This is particularly important when considering the affective dynamic of neoliberal culture, whose key machinic effect is to enable subjects to experience sociality only as a source of displeasure – as a source of fear, paranoia, insecurity and competitive aggression (Massumi 2002) – and to experience market relations as the only valorised and therefore pleasurable mode of relationality. Shopping of various kinds becomes the only source of fun, because it expresses the only permissible mode of relationality and hence the only permissible experience of joyous affect and potential power (de Graaf, Wann and Naylor 2001, Hamilton and Denniss 2006, James 2008, Lawson 2009, Soper, Ryle and Thomas 2009). But Protevi offers quite a different example, which is highly relevant to our argument in this book, differentiating between the two different types of power designated by the French terms *pouvoir* (meaning both the ability to do something specific and sovereign power) and *puissance* (meaning potency, potential, general vigour).

> The difference between *pouvoir* and *puissance* allows us to nuance the notion of joyous and sad affect with the notions of active and passive power. Consider the paradigm case of fascist joy. The Nazis at the Nuremberg rallies were filled with joyous affect but this joy of being swept up into an emergent body politic was passive. The Nazis were stratified: their joy was triggered by the presence of a transcendent figure manipulating symbols – flags and faces – and by the imposition of a rhythm or a forced entrainment – marches and salutes and songs. Upon leaving the rally, they had no autonomous power (*puissance*) to make mutually empowering connections. In fact, they could only feel sad at being isolated, removed from the thrilling presence of the leader. (Protevi 2009: 50–1)

We might add to Protevi's description the observation that the fascism clearly does not entirely deny its participants a kind of autonomous, creative *puissance*. The anti-Semitic gangs which became the core of the SS would be one manifestation of this; the sheer inventive power of fascism during its successful reconstructions of Italy and Germany, when its ability to 'make the trains run on time' impressed so much of the world, would be another. The point is that fascism must both

incite this *puissance* and then contain it, stratify it and territorialise it according to Leviathan logic, imposing an arborescent mode of relationality upon the very field of potential which it has itself potentiated. An interesting question to consider here is whether even the most extreme form of fascism can ever *really* operate according to pure Leviathan logic, invoking a hierarchical-yet-individualised collectivity from a disaggregated collection of individuals, or whether there must always be some intensification of horizontal relationality, however momentary, in order for a collectivity to emerge which can then be quickly territorialised and hegemonised by an authoritarian populism. The historical record clearly suggests the latter: no fascism without a prior moment of radical social dislocation. Laclau brilliantly explains the mechanics by which it is social dislocation which always creates the context within which radical political projects (from right or left) are able to hegemonise a situation, because it is only under conditions of extreme dislocation that there is sufficient opportunity for a large-scale redefinition of the social situation by intervening political forces (Laclau 1990: 3–96). We can now add to this the observation that such situations of social dislocation invariably seem to be characterised by a potentially democratic moment when the potency and potential creativity of horizontal social relations becomes very apparent: a moment when the possibility of some far more egalitarian and participative social formation than the one which preceded it – which is also to say the possibility of 'justice' and 'democracy' as conceived by Derrida (1994: 27–8; 65) – seems real, before the territorialising action of authoritarian populist leaders can become effective (which does not always happen). This is almost a truism of revolutionary history, and certainly describes the situation of dislocation and pre-revolutionary ferment in both Italy and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, before their respective dictators came to power.

Having said this, however, the same history makes clear that it is never enough for radical forces merely to push for a continuous deterritorialisation of social relations; without some alternative plan for reterritorialisation – in other words for a hegemonic stabilisation, however deliberately temporary, or however democratic and pluralistic – then their reactionary opponents will impose a stratification upon the situation sooner or later. This is why a truly authoritarian populism such as Mussolini's can at times be difficult to differentiate from the

democratic populism of a Hugo Chavez, which uses the techniques of populism and even strategic demagoguery ultimately to extend and intensify democratic relations in the face of fierce opposition from capital and its agents (Ali 2008). This only makes the task of such differentiation all the more important, however, and certainly does not justify the liberal tendency to conflate right- and left-wing populisms into a single category ('authoritarianism', 'totalitarianism', etc.).

The Democratic Sublime

Another issue to consider here is whether this general state of dislocation and deterritorialisation, of potential and *puissance*, will necessarily be experienced as 'joy'. Mouffe has demonstrated clearly that democracy is not simply a condition of consensus, but rather of institutionalised *dissensus*, and Maeckelbergh shows how important this idea has been for sections of the anti-capitalist movement (Mouffe 2000, Maeckelbergh 2009). Similar points have been made by Lyotard and Rancière in their respective philosophical registers (Lyotard 1988, Rancière 1998). If the experience of this democratic potential is an experience of expanded possibility, of an increase in the potential scope for undecidable decisions, which is to say for multiple becomings, then it will not necessarily be experienced as 'pleasurable' or 'joyful' in any ordinary sense; democracy will not always feel fulfilling and unifying, and may often feel disconcerting, disturbing and frightening, but, following our argument here, it may always be accompanied by a certain ecstatic and corporeal awareness of the field of possibility which is the unknown and unconditioned future. In the post-Lacanian language of Roland Barthes, one name for this ecstatic and corporeal awareness would be *jouissance*[7] (bliss, enjoyment, ecstasy, orgasm) (Barthes 1975). In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, this might be what we achieve when we attain the plane of immanence, successfully making ourselves a 'body without organs' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 1988) – an unstratified condition of maximal potential connectivity. Another such description can be found in Sara Ahmed's comments on the experience of 'wonder'.

> As Spinoza ... and Deleuze ... teach us, capacities do not belong to individuals, but are about how bodies are affected by other bodies.

> As a result: 'You do not know beforehand what a body or mind can do, in a given encounter, a given arrangement, a given combination' [(Deleuze 1988: 67)]. The capacity for wonder is the space of opening up to the surprise of each combination; each body, which turns this way or that, impresses upon others, affecting what they can do. Wonder opens up a collective space, by allowing the surfaces of the world to make an impression, as they become see-able or feelable *as* surfaces. It is not so much that the feeling of wonder passes (so that I feel wonder, in the face of your wonder). Rather, the very orientation of wonder, with its open faces and bodies, involves a reorientation of one's relation to the world. Wonder keeps bodies and spaces open to the surprise of others. But we don't know, with such bodies, what we can do. (Ahmed 2004: 183)

Whether such 'wonder' would always be joyful is an open question. In fact, it may be that to impose the terms 'joyful' or 'sad' upon the affective, intensive condition that we are trying to outline here would be inappropriate: these are descriptions of emotions that have already been defined somewhat in terms of their semiotic and subjective implications, and in terms of their specific 'extensity', in Bergson's language (2001: 107–14). The point is that this condition of intensive undecidability and 'joyous affect' – this 'democratic sublime', as we might call it – *may* be experienced as joyful, pleasurable, exciting, even while still possibly frightening; but it may also be experienced as enervating, or terrifying to the point of debilitation, or simply alienating. And it may be that the difference between progressive and reactionary cultural forms is precisely their capacity to enable it to be experienced in one way or the other.

Relational Aesthetics and the Politics of Carnival

It's worth considering how this idea of a democratic aesthetic might relate to one that has been influential in the art world in recent years. Nicolas Bourriaud's widely influential advocacy of 'relational aesthetics' and 'relational art' in the late 1990s preceded the recent advocacy of 'relational' politics by Anglophone political thinkers by several years. Relational art is broadly conceived as art which is conscious of its place and role in 'the whole of human relations' (Bourriaud

2002: 113), wherein artists play roles as pivotal or catalytic nodes in a network of such relations, but are never situated above or outside of those relations, rather than occupying the privileged positions accorded to them in most nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories of art practice. Continuing and to some extent intensifying the radical critique of institutionalised and gallery-based art practice which has carried on since the early days of Dada, Bourriaud cites Félix Guattari, amongst others, as one of his key theoretical sources for advocating an art which explores the relations between bodies and environments in a radically experimental fashion. A famous example of 'relational art' referred to by Bourriaud is the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija, whose most characteristic installation involved the establishment of a kitchen in a gallery space in which the artist served soup to the visitors in a deliberate attempt to produce a convivial and egalitarian social situation, as a general experiment exploring sociability as a dynamic and pleasurable element of the experiential continuum, and in opposition to the commodification and marketisation of all social relations under neoliberalism.

Bourriaud's argument has been subject to a widely cited critique by Claire Bishop, who herself cites Laclau and Mouffe as her key authorities (Bishop 2004). Bishop's key argument is that, following Laclau and Mouffe, the experience of democracy is one of conflict and antagonism,[8] whereas the relational situations constructed by a Tiravanija seem more like cosy manifestations of a utopian communitarianism in which antagonism is denied or suppressed; in the terms established so far in this book, they tend towards meta-individualist celebrations of 'community' rather than explorations of the complexity and undecidable potential of infinite relationality, or else to simply banal and depoliticised assertions of relationality as a general social fact, with no reflection upon the power differentials which inform actual relationships. Bishop's argument raises some crucial issues and, as we shall see, I think her criticisms are clearly apposite when applied to much of the art practice which Bourriaud praises or which has been associated with his idea of 'relational art'. However, her reading of Bourriaud specifically is problematic, in ways which it is instructive to examine. The first point to note here is that Bishop, strangely, makes no reference to Bourriaud's engagement with Guattari, who is clearly his most important theoretical source.

We can get a strong sense of what is at stake in Bishop's reading of Bourriaud by comparing his ideas with those of the nineteenth-century French philosopher Jean-Marie Guyau, who has rightly been identified as one of the key forerunners of anti-individualist affect theory (Seyfert 2012). Guyau's seminal study of *Art from the Sociological Perspective* (Guyau 1895) argues against any individualistic idea of creativity and proposes an idea of affective transmission which is characterised by none of the individualist paranoia of his near contemporary, Gustav Le Bon. However, Guyau does ultimately seem to see the collective as constituting a harmonious unity, and reproduces a very ancient assumption about aesthetic pleasure according to which it derives from an appreciation of 'harmony' and unification. It would be misleading to describe Guyau as yet another exponent of 'meta-individualism': he is simply too attuned to the relational dynamic of the social and to the horizontal logic of affectivity. But his pre-modernist conception of art ultimately has little room in it for the conception we are developing here of a radically democratic aesthetic expressing the creative potential, not of unity, but of dislocation, difference and multiplicity. As such, he outlines a theory of art which is very close to the one which Bishop seems to attribute to Bourriaud, and no doubt rightly attributes to many practitioners of relational art. Clearly, however, Bourriaud himself does *not* think along these lines, as he always stresses the radically open-ended, unpredictable and experimental nature of both the relationality and the art that he values.

I would suggest that Bishop's reading of Bourriaud is a testament to the importance of exploring the issues with which the present work is concerned. Informed by a particular understanding of Laclau and Mouffe, she seems to assume that because Bourriaud's exploration of sociality is not focussed exclusively on its conflictual character at the ontic level, then his understanding of sociality must instead be informed by a celebratory communitarianism which is sure of the positive ethical value of community as such. By the same token, because his arguments are not informed by an ontology which – like that of Laclau and Mouffe – understands the social purely as the product of a constitutive negativity, Bishop seems to read Bourriaud's arguments as implicitly informed by a belief in the ontological positivity of community. What this reading and its governing assumptions leave out, and what I think Bourriaud is actually trying to get at, is the

possibility of understanding the social as, ontologically, constituted neither as a positivity nor as the product of a simple negativity, but as a *quasi-positivity*, which is exactly the ontological status of the social understood as constituted within the horizon of infinite relationality. At its best, it is exactly this understanding of the social and its democratic potential which 'relational art' can enable.

Bishop also seems rather to overlook Bourriaud's key argument, that relational art is 'radical' today not because it simply tries to stage 'democratic' social relations, but because the specific strategic situation of a culture hegemonised by the values of neoliberalism – which is today the main threat to any form of democracy – is such that any evocation whatsoever of the social and convivial as a valorised element of experience is bound to be tendentially oppositional and pro-democratic, to a certain extent. If we assume, following a certain reading of Laclau and Mouffe which is certainly very widely circulated (although I do not think that they themselves would endorse it), that 'antagonism' is the *only* feature of 'democracy', then of course there is nothing of value in Bourriaud's position. However, if we accept that any definition of 'democracy' must include the possibility not only of dissensus and division, but also of collective decision making, proceeding from just the sort of relational situation which the art practices admired by Bourriaud strive to create, then we must allow him this observation: that in merely asserting the creative potency of sociality against neoliberalism's insistence on its impotence, relational art already enacts its own antagonism to neoliberal post-democracy.

This is not to say that the idea of relational art is immune from any possible criticism. Bishop's criticism is clearly highly relevant to the more banally communitarian modes of relational art (and indeed to the more banally communitarian modes of 'relational' politics) and remains a crucial reminder of the importance of keeping open spaces for collective self-reflection, antagonism and dissent in any formation which aspires to a democratic character. Furthermore, I would like to supplement Bishop's critique with my own criticism of 'relational art' in practice, specifically informed by Laclau and Mouffe. As I have argued elsewhere, Laclau and Mouffe's most important contribution to contemporary political thoughts lies in their demonstration that even a political theory and practice entirely shaped by the most radical philosophical developments of the late twentieth

century, and committed to the radical pluralism of the post-1968 New Left, need not, should not, and cannot abandon the attempt to think politics *strategically*, rather than collapsing into an incoherent exercise in reactive tactics or ineffectual utopianism. The problem with most 'relational art' is that it absolutely exemplifies the tendency within both cultural and political radicalism to engage in 'tactical' interventions which simply have no social or political effect, to the extent that they become isolated enclaves within which a certain set of ideas or experiences can be preserved and reproduced, while having no discernible impact on anything outside of themselves. Experiential laboratories they may be; but an experiential laboratory with no ability to publicise its results, with no 'strategic orientation' to the outside and to the future, remains nothing but an enclosed territory and a depoliticised space (Gilbert 2008b).

To put this in very crude terms: my own experience of visiting a Tiravanija installation (in 2005 at the Serpentine Gallery in London, at an installation where the artist recreated his New York flat in the gallery and occasionally cooked for visitors) was hardly a transformatory one, and I could find no evidence there, or in any available literature, of anyone who had visited it ever actually having the nature of their experience or perception of relationality permanently transformed in any way. Of course, in theory, if some individual had visited the installation who had not already been well schooled in the codes of conceptual art and radical cultural theory, who was somehow sensitive to the supposed authority of art, and yet was entirely oblivious to the general critique of contemporary individualist and capitalist culture, then it is conceivable that they would have had their perceptual relation to the world radically altered. But does anyone believe that this actually happens? The problem with almost all conceptual art today, including relational art, is that it is endlessly preaching to the converted and shows no strategic ambition either to tell its audience anything it didn't already know, or to engage in forms of productive relationality which might actually effect some long-term cultural change. If anything, it becomes part of the apparatus of what we might call 'compulsory reflexivity': this typical tendency of postmodern culture and 'control society' institutions invites, or even obliges, subjects to participate in an endless questioning and deconstruction of their identities and relation to the world while containing that process

in such a way that it can never become the basis for an actual political decision or, in Guattari's terms, can never give rise to a new 'collective assemblage of enunciation' (Guattari 1989).

Possible Worlds

Another theorist who draws heavily on Guattari is Maurizio Lazzarato. Lazzarato's wide-ranging philosophical and analytical writing, which is very close to Hardt and Negri and deeply informed by Deleuze and Guattari, has many possible implications for this line of enquiry, but here I refer specifically to his 2004 book *Les Révolutions du capitalisme* (literally, *The Revolutions of Capitalism*). In this work Lazzarato argues that contemporary capitalism depends not so much upon the production of material commodities as upon the creation of 'worlds': coherent zones of experience, such as the complex assemblages of mood, affect and corporeal disposition which competing brands try to sell to consumers (just think of the way brands such as Nike invite the customer to participate in an 'existential territory' (Guattari 1989) of earnest, yet minimalist, urban cool and quasi-magical corporeal self-transcendence).[9] Post-Fordist capitalism depends even more than previous forms on the creative co-operation of 'brains'; and yet, as we have already suggested, the forms of relationship demanded by such creativity are not those which tend to be amenable to capitalist exploitation, and so the need is very great for capital and its agents to modulate the forms of that creation and the dangerous 'possible worlds' that it might generate. Stressing the close relationship between creativity and co-operation in general, advocating a radical democratic politics of experiment and invention, Lazzarato highlights the 'creative' and even 'artistic' dimensions of all social activity, and cites the pioneering performance artist Joseph Beuys – a radical forerunner of relational art – in doing so (Lazzarato 2004: 93). In this respect, his is not a philosophy which could give any specially privileged place to the expressive arts over other forms of creative activity (2004: 220), all of which might or might not succeed in constituting 'possible worlds' which avoid being captured and immediately territorialised by capital. Nonetheless, the implication of Lazzarato's model is that various forms of cultural practice (which could indeed include activities as varied as childcare and conceptual art) might be looked to for their potential to

generate new assemblages of experience and meaning which expand the range of existential possibilities for their participants, and others coming after them, while resisting, as far as possible, capture and commodification. 'The affirmation of the common is immediately a process of bifurcation of possible worlds' (2004: 239).

One of Lazzarato's sources in articulating this position is the influential Russian literary and cultural theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin, whose celebrations of 'polyphonic' and 'carnivalesque' cultural forms (1968, 1973) certainly come as close as anything to an aesthetic informed by the ideas of sociality and democracy being proposed in this book. Bakhtin famously praises Dostoevsky's fiction for its portrayal of a diversity of fictional voices, all of whom – crucially – influence each other in complex and 'unfinalisable' ways, an approach which is informed by attention to precisely what I have called the 'infinite relationality' of social relations and singular selfhood. He celebrates the writing of the French Renaissance satirist Rabelais as a depiction and expression of the 'carnivalesque': a democratic and demotic aesthetic which resists in one gesture individualism, meta-individualism, social hierarchy, and any form of idealism or mind–body dualism, celebrating the pleasures of the body while conceiving of it as always continuous with the rest of physical reality, rather than as the point of individual separation from it, in a manner which resonates distinctly with Simondon's understanding of the preindividual.

Bakhtin was widely taken up in the English-speaking humanities in the 1980s (for example, by Stallybrass and White 1986), albeit mainly by scholars who, like Bakhtin himself had more to say about literary texts than about the implications of his ideas for any wider cultural politics (see Hirschkop and Shepherd 1989, for example). One point which we can draw from Bakhtin's ideas, however, is that an aesthetic which merely celebrates 'relationality', while it may pose a challenge to the normativity of neoliberal individualism and the specific power relations which that supports, also risks normalising those other power relationships which may inform any given social situation, by simply ignoring the stratifying effects of relations of gender, 'race', ethnicity, sexuality, age, and so on. The carnivalesque at its best insists on the *simultaneous* overturning of all such relations in the name of something like Derrida's idea of impossible 'justice' (which I take to be simply a name for the ideal of a wholly non-hierarchical relation) *and*

the rejection of both individualism and dualism. It's not surprising, then, that we can see some direct parallels between this idea and some of the most influential concepts to have emerged from queer and postcolonial theory respectively. Judith Butler's defence of drag artists as deliberate gender subversives exposing the socially contrived and 'performative' nature of gendered identity to the world is notoriously problematic, but still irresistibly suggestive (Butler 1990: 137–8). It has clear resonances with the concept of the carnivalesque, given their common conceptual emphasis on overturning normalised hierarchies, as well as the historic role of cross-dressing in some actual practices of carnival and the recent politicisation of such practices by queer activists (Markwell and Waitt 2009). Homi Bhabha's influential claims for the 'hybridity' of all identity (Bhabha 1994) and for the value of a 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' (García-Moreno and Pfeiffer 1996), against any kind of ethnic or cultural essentialism, have often been made with reference to the writing of Salman Rushdie, whose most famous novels are noted for their deliberately 'polyphonic' structure, and their entirely carnivalesque celebrations of transformation, unpredictability and contingency. From such perspectives, it becomes important to cultivate a sensitivity to infinite relationality, not for its own sake, but only to the extent that this might facilitate the overturning of oppressive modes of relationality and hierarchical social relations. The carnival, crucially, always enables the particularities of its constituent participants to express themselves, even while showing that those particularities can never be wholly enumerated and 'finalised'.

The idea of the carnival also has very obvious resonances with some of the cultural forms which we have already mentioned in this chapter: festivals and raves. During the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the explicit aims of the organisers of and participants in such events could be more or less summarised in Bakhtin's description of the carnivalesque, and their subversive quality was certainly taken seriously by the UK government, as we have seen; to this day, few scholarly discussions of these phenomena fail to mention Bakhtin (for example, Anderton 2011). Does this mean that they therefore constituted exemplary spaces for the invention of 'possible worlds' beyond the logic of neoliberalism or even capitalism? The historical record certainly suggests so. I have already expressed some scepticism about the possibility of anyone having their life changed by a visit to a relational art exhibit; but the

popular literature on rave, and on festival culture from the late 1960s into the 1990s, is replete with stories of individuals and entire groups of friends adopting some completely different way of life, as far as possible from the circuits of wage labour and capital accumulation, as a result of sometimes only fleeting contact with these zones of existential experiment (McKay 1996, Reynolds 1998). Indeed, the literature on phenomena such as the global psychedelic trance movement, or the annual Burning Man festival in the United States, is full of witnesses to the ongoing transformatory capacity of such events and practices today (St John 2012).

On the other hand, the impermanence and long-term socio-political irrelevance of the largely personal transformations which such sites tend to facilitate is a consistent theme both of popular fiction and of intellectual commentary (Gilbert and Pearson 1999, Gilbert 2008b, Jones 2011). This is partly symptomatic of the long-term success of neoliberalism in neutralising and disaggregating any opposition to itself, as any hegemonic force will: hegemonic neoliberalism is perfectly happy for individuals to undergo personal transformations, so long as they do not aggregate or catalyse any significant social transformations. It also points to a real problem with the very idea of carnival as a radical cultural form. The medieval carnivals which Bakhtin takes as his model were not revolutionary cultural experiments, but well-established social rituals whose symbolic function was arguably not to challenge, but to *reinforce*, the cultural norms and social hierarchies which they theatrically overturned (the fact that they went on with the full support of church and feudal authority, and so rarely escalated into revolutions or even rebellions, surely bears this out). The danger of self-defined 'carnivalesque' spaces, of cultural 'temporary autonomous zones', is that they become spaces of enclosure within which any challenge to hegemonic social norms is safely contained, posing no threat to wider power relations. This is certainly what happened to the most politicised strands of the 'counterculture' and its legatees in the British festival and rave movements, wherein the commitment to a homogeneous countercultural identity on the part of the most militant participants tended to undermine attempts to attract participation or even sympathy from wider sections of the public, while also masking an often highly stratified set of internal relations (especially gender relations) within activist groups (Gilbert 2008b: 203–33). On the

other hand, it could be argued that the whole point about 'carnival' from a modern perspective is that it takes on an entirely different meaning in the context of capitalist modernity, and the historical record since the seventeenth century shows how nervous hegemonic groups have often been about the revolutionary threat which they believed to be posed by carnivalesque expressions: the first modern republican government, led by Oliver Cromwell in the 1650s, even tried to replace the traditional celebration of Christmas with sober prayer and worship. Either way, what is really important here is the observation that the political effectiveness of carnivalesque practices is always partly dependent upon two key characteristics.

On the one hand, it is dependent upon their capacity to connect with others, to render possible 'worlds' which are not merely the property of discrete and homogeneous groups but which are shareable and extendable. If they are not to become sad and defensive enclaves characterised by what Nietzsche called the *ressentiment* of 'slave morality' (1918), then such experimental formations must themselves exhibit that potential for multiple connectivity which Protevi calls 'joyous affect'. Their joyousness – their tendency to experience becoming as creative, rather than threatening – is precisely the condition of their democratic potential to become real 'attractors' (DeLanda 2002). Of course this formulation is highly abstract: in practice it means something fairly simple, which is that radical formations that do not make their radicalism enjoyable for new participants do not have a great deal of impact. A very good example of the issues at stake here is the strength and weakness of the Green movement as a cultural–political project in the United Kingdom. On the one hand, the movement has clear connections and overlaps with an entire 'alternative' culture which has survived since the 1960s, and in some places has become locally more or less hegemonic (hence the recent election of Caroline Lucas, Britain's only Green MP, in Brighton). A number of annual music festivals promote explicitly 'green' themes and bill themselves as manifestations and celebrations of the associated lifestyle, a cultural assemblage which includes vegetarianism, a commitment to cycling, an interest in yoga, 'world' or 'psychedelic' musics, and many others.[10] The problem is that although this assemblage is attractive to varying degrees to significant sections of the public, it is viewed by many others as being no fun at all, but considered to be repellent in its austerity and

its very narrow range of cultural references. The challenge presented by such a situation is to keep trying to invent cultural forms and projects which can be shared both by those who already participate habitually in such alternative formations and those who currently do not (cf. Soper, Ryle and Thomas 2009).

On the other hand, for such a formation to be democratically effective, it must be constituted in part by processes of self-questioning and by the expression of the complexities and heterogeneities which characterise any social situation. The difference between carnival as a social ritual sustaining the established order and carnival as a radically democratic intervention is the difference between a carnival which merely *reverses* a social hierarchy – while symbolically re-inscribing the very binary relation which it temporarily inverts – and one which *displaces* that hierarchy, deconstructing the relations which sustain it. This action of displacement inevitably produces a dynamic by which the whole system of relations is called into question, if only implicitly; and by the same token a certain self-questioning tendency is characteristic of any social or cultural formation by or within which such displacements are attempted. As is very well documented, 'radical' assemblages – even those which may be explicitly theoretically committed to horizontalist politics – have a tendency to produce their own internal divisions, stratifications and hierarchies (what Guattari calls 'micro-fascisms'), and an even stronger tendency to reproduce those of the wider society: between men and women, whites and non-whites, and so on. The classic account of the tendency for unaccountable hierarchies to crystallise within 'leaderless' organisations is Jo Freeman's 1975 essay 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness',[11] in which she points out that in the absence of transparent and accountable organisational structures, unaccountable informal elites and an individualistic 'star system' will often take their place. At the same time, cultural theorists such as Sarah Thornton (1995) and Arun Saldhana (2007) have pointed to the tendency of 'subcultural' groups to reproduce hierarchies of gender, class and ethnicity: cool London clubbers, for example, turning their noses up at the taste preferences of white working-class 'Essex girls', or psychedelic trance fans in Goa treating locals with neocolonial disdain. I would like to link these two sets of phenomena with another, perhaps more amorphous one: the well-documented sense of complacency and introversion which so often strikes the casual visitor to such sites of

well-entrenched countercultural normality as the Boom festival in Portugal or Burning Man in the United States (Jones 2011, St John 2012).[12] Although these sites have many defenders and eulogisers, they also frequently provoke a sense of inchoate dissatisfaction in casual visitors, as the enormous expression of collective creativity which they represent seems to have so little impact upon the wider culture. Compared to the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, or even the rave and festival movements of the 1980s and 1990s, the participants in these events seem generally indifferent to the possibility of changing social relations in general, so long as they are permitted to pursue their lifestyles more or less unhindered. In an age of postmodern complexity, it might be a perfectly intelligent decision for opponents of neoliberal culture to constitute a culture of their own and try to have as much fun as possible inhabiting it; but this formulation cannot quite account for that certain sense of lassitude, of affective inadequacy and relative immobility, which seems to differentiate those alternative cultural territories which have become complacent about their status from those within which the democratic sublime can still be experienced.

Raymond Williams makes a famous distinction between 'alternative' formations, which seek to defend a non-mainstream lifestyle, but without challenging hegemonic norms, and 'oppositional' tendencies, which do make some more or less direct challenge to them (Williams 1977). This terminology is obviously applicable in these cases, although his is a potentially problematic distinction, because it implies a rather linear conception of both politics and history, according to which we could always know in advance what kind of activity would be 'authentically oppositional'; and because self-consciously 'militant' formations can easily end up as cultural cul-de-sacs, offering no serious challenge to hegemonic relations precisely because of their inability to resonate with other constituencies.[13] We might do better to replace Williams's alternative–oppositional binary with a differentiation between formations which only constitute defensive enclaves and those which seek to widen their sphere of effectivity, or at least to catalyse new becomings at their borders (Gilbert 2001). One of the most characteristic features of the former is their tendency to become organised around the expression, defence, and complacent celebration of recognisable *identities,* rather than around a general problematisation of all fixed identity. One of the characteristic features of the latter

is a tendency towards either formal or informal processes of collective self-interrogation and self-problematisation. We can draw examples of these differing tendencies from some of the key moments of cultural radicalism in recent decades. A good illustration is the famous event in October 1967 when the Diggers – the San Fransisco activist group who took their name from the seventeenth-century English radicals – staged the public 'Death of Hippie', holding a symbolic funeral for an imaginary individual whom they declared to be the 'son of media'. This was a classic refutation of the tendency of liberal culture to try to simplify the complexity and deny the creative multiplicity of an experimental social milieu, by defining it in terms of an imagined individual identity. The Diggers understood that by defining the counterculture in terms of the stereotyped image of the 'hippie' – by 'facialising' it, to use Deleuze and Guattari's term (1988: 167–91) – corporate media were working against its radical potential, and their action constituted an exemplary act of creative self-questioning on their own part.

For another example we could consider the historic fate of the idea of 'punk' in the late 1970s. On the one hand, the idea of punk as a definable genre of music attached to a specific subcultural identity had always possessed a reactionary dimension, with bands such as The Ramones being celebrated for returning rock'n'roll to its primitive roots, rescuing it from the distracting avant-gardism of the early 1970s.[14] This version of punk quickly degenerated into the most formally and affectively inert genre of post-war popular music: 'alternative' or 'indie' rock. On the other hand, the idea of punk as a sort of irreducible *event*, after which a whole range of aesthetic, organisational and socio-economic possibilities emerged, but which could not be contained by any one of them, made possible a vast range of productive experiments, such as the astonishing exercises in feminist aesthetics conducted by The Raincoats, The Slits, and others.[15] This is precisely why the idea of 'post-punk' as an indeterminate historical and generic category has proved so suggestive, even very recently (Reynolds 2005). Here, just as in the case of the 1960s counterculture, what characterised the radically democratic dimension of the project was both an insistent self-questioning and a refusal to settle into a stable collective identity. And here we see the real value of Bishop's critique of Bourriaud: while she may be wrong to imply that institutionalised antagonism

is all there is to democracy, she is absolutely right to remind us that any mere celebration of communality, which does not in some sense stage the ongoing and perpetual self-problematisation of the group and its constituent identities, cannot be democratic in a meaningful sense either.

Having said this, it would be problematic simply to dismiss projects such as Burning Man or even the Boom festival for their failure to exhibit these qualities: to some extent their lack of self-doubt and political ambition are conditions of possibility for their success as sites of relatively safe affective and symbolic experimentation. If they lack effective connections with wider political movements then the fault lies as much with those movements, or with all of us who might have built new ones but haven't yet. Although it is right to try to catalyse processes of democratic self-questioning and the interrogation of internal hierarchies in all social situations, it remains the case that in the face of neoliberalism's attempt to privatise every aspect of existence, it becomes politically crucial to defend every such possible site of 'collective joy' (Ehrenreich 2007).

It is also important to note, of course, that raves and festivals are very far indeed from exhausting the possible forms of such sites. I have referred to them consistently here because they constitute an easy illustration of what such a site can look like, and they have been through interesting processes of radicalisation and reterritorialisation over recent decades. There are many other such sites which are arguably much more important, however. Given its importance to the cultural life of millions, for example, the commercialisation and celebritisation of sport in recent years is arguably a far greater cause for concern.[16] And instances in which physical crowds gather are not of course the only significant potential sites of shared joyous affect. Social networking protocols are just the latest manifestation of the inherent capacity of advanced communications technologies to manifest this potential, at an extraordinary level of distribution and complexity, enabling all kinds of empowering connections to occur between disparate elements of human experience; and it is clearly a potential which companies such as Facebook wish to contain, delimit, and exploit carefully: ensuring, for example, that users maintain a single individual profile, identifying themselves as easily trackable

consumers, and do not engage in any kind of activity which cannot be profitably data-mined.

But I want to take this complexification of the idea of a 'site of collective joy' even further. I would suggest, in fact, that this kind of joy need not have anything to do with the physical proximity of bodies or the noise of the electronic crowd. Even an activity as superficially solitary as reading in a library can be understood as an experience of such a site, to the extent that it involves a creative and productive interaction between singularities: those elements of the reader's conscious and unconscious attention which are engaged in reading; the multiple ideas and possible uses thereof which are partially expressed in the books they read; the elements of the physical, architectural, economic, social, cultural and political assemblage which make the very existence of a library possible; and so on. A library can only exist – can only be individuated – as the consequence of a complex process of social interactions, and can only function well to the extent to which it works as a commons to increase the capacities of its users, while remaining sufficiently flexible and open in form and function to accommodate the invention of multiple and changing uses. Perhaps most importantly for our purposes, a library is not simply a public space or a private space, but must be at the same time both and neither, enabling a diverse population to share resources while also enabling each person, if necessary, to do so relatively undisturbed. This, just as much as the raving crowd (Gilbert 1997), incarnates the ideal of the multitude as a collectivity which empowers but does not suppress the singularity of its constituent elements; and it is possible to experience the democratic sublime in a moment of exemplary clarity or exhilarating confusion (or to experience the disempowerment of bored frustration) at least as much in the one place as the other. What such spaces have in common is that they are all, in a certain sense, spaces of *decision*, within and from which new individuations and new becomings can emerge. This is not to say they are necessarily spaces within which actual conscious choices are made (although they might be). In fact they are spaces within which we can only experience the ultimate *impossibility* of making a 'decision' or 'choice' according to the classical liberal model of the rational, intentional, autonomous and autochthonous subject: a decision which is final, which is ours alone, and which is an expression of only our rational interests. But it is by

virtue of this fact that they are spaces conducive to the expansion of a field of potentiality and possibility, without which no new decisions, no new individuations, no collective joy, and hence no democracy are ever possible.

Problems of Strategy and Government

The arguments presented in this chapter so far invite some obvious reactions: How far is it possible to construct systems and institutions which facilitate the emergence of the kind of hetero-affective collective decisions described earlier in the chapter, not just at the level of political organisation, but also at the level of government? At the same time, at the level of political organisation itself: what happens when waiting for such events of collective individuation to emerge simply will not do, when circumstances demand that determinate, conscious choices have to be made here and now?

One answer to this question is to observe that social change is of course not ultimately possible without determined efforts by broad-based aggregations of political forces co-ordinated by a viable political strategy: without, in other words, hegemonic projects. The democratic potential of the Latin American multitude would not have reached any kind of realisation without the strategic co-ordination enabled by the political parties led by Chavez, Morales and Lula. The women's movement only secured significant results by successfully transforming the common sense of a majority of the public in many countries in the world and implementing consequent legislative change. The inability of, for example, the rave and festival movements in the United Kingdom to defend themselves from criminalisation and commercialisation is testament to how far being 'an affective process without a subject' gets you in the long term, if your enemies are stronger and better organised than you are (McKay 1996, Gilbert and Pearson 1999). One of the characteristics that all of the most successful political and cultural projects for democratisation share – including but not limited to those already discussed in this chapter – is what I have called a 'strategic orientation' (Gilbert 2008b). By this I mean not a determinate strategy, but merely an awareness of the complexity and specificity of their strategic situation: their strengths,

limitations, threats, opportunities and opponents in the broader field of political forces.

However, if this sounds like a rather minimal concept, then so it should, because it is important not to have unreasonable expectations of those types of political and cultural intervention which necessarily operate on a 'molecular' scale. No single project, organisation, tendency or process can be expected to deliver radical social change; such change can only ever come about as the result of a complex distribution and aggregation of forces. The gains (and failures) of the women's movement, for example, have always been a product of relationships between interventions in the domains of affective relations, symbolic culture (for example, involving questions of the representation of women in print and broadcast media), political organisation (for example, involving questions of women's representation within political and governmental institutions), and institutional management (Fraser 2013). To put it crudely: the upshot of this observation is that the necessary task of hard political strategising should not be understood as falling on every group who wants to make social change happen: under conditions of advanced neoliberal post-democracy, it may well have to fall to established and well-resourced mainstream political organisations: the unions and the social-democratic parties, in particular, or those intermediary organisations which seek to mediate between them and a range of other social actors.[17] Conversely, professional political organisers and leaders may have to accept that they cannot bring about the cultural change which would make their political projects viable, and instead be on the lookout for sympathetic and potentially important tendencies as they emerge within wider culture.

The complex interdependence between the 'molar' and 'molecular' dimensions of politics is not, of course, a new phenomenon and does not work in only one direction. For example, the efflorescence of radical democratic demands in the 1960s was itself partly a product of the successes of the social-democratic governmental projects from the 1930s onwards, which freed large populations from the immediate fear of poverty for the first time since the industrial revolution, so enabling a profounder imaginative challenge amongst many of them to existing social relations than would otherwise have been possible;[18] this social-democratic success was itself made possible in part by the

'molecular' cultural changes of the inter-war period: in particular the diffusion of 'modernism', in both its avant-garde and popular variants (Williams 1989). It is therefore obviously a mistake to imagine that either the strategic, molar and hegemonic or the molecular, affective and experimental dimensions of political struggle can ever be ignored. Nor can any one of them be expected to bear the full weight of hopes and demands for social change. In most contemporary contexts, it is to be expected that the multiple tasks required to make change possible are likely to be borne by quite different kinds of agent: from art movements to think tanks to university departments to civil society organisations to political parties. Such tasks include generating new modes of thought and perception which might contribute to cultural change; crystallising those affective changes into meaningful political demands; strategically co-ordinating a range of demands and constituencies into a viable political coalition; delivering a coherent programme for government which instantiates some of those changes; recruiting and mobilising a cadre of professional politicians who can implement this programme; sustaining the affective and semiotic potency of those demands to the point that such realisation becomes likely; and many others. Because such tasks require quite different dispositions and competences, it is not surprising that their agents often dislike each other and find mutual comprehension difficult; but it is probably necessary for any kind of democratic progress that there should exist a degree of what we might call 'molecular sympathy' between them. Arguably one of the most debilitating features of the political Left – mainstream and radical – in recent decades has been its inability to connect or even resonate at all with sites of radical cultural experimentation.[19]

This raises once again the issue of what kinds of political organisation and institutional innovation might make radical democratic hopes concretely realisable. This is an issue addressed by Erik Olin Wright and Archon Fung in their co-edited book *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance* (Wright and Fung 2003). This work is largely a collection of studies of localised experiments in participatory and deliberative democracy, such as the famous Porto Alegre participatory budgeting process, or the decentralised planning process deployed by the leftist government of Kerala.[20] In itself the collection stands as evidence for the viability

of participatory democratic forms in wildly varying contexts; but what is particularly interesting for us here is the conclusion reached by the editors in their epilogue.

Wright and Fung argue that such experiments in participatory democracy, at least under present socio-political conditions, are always in danger of degeneration into democratic inefficacy, or co-option, or neutralisation by more powerful political and commercial forces. They argue that these outcomes are only avoidable where there exists sufficient 'countervailing power' – in other words, sufficiently well-organised and mobilised political constituencies – to defend their democratic status. Going further, they suggest that this countervailing power must be deployed by forces which are strong and well-organised, but whose relationship to government is not habitually adversarial, but instead collaborative: engaging in complex tactical problem-solving, and constructive institutional engagement, but from a position of strategic strength. Wright and Fung underscore, with a justified degree of pessimism, the difficulty of mobilising on such terms movements and organisations whose identities and practices are grounded in adversarial relationships to existing power structures.

A number of the conceptual distinctions we have encountered in this study are relevant to understanding this argument. In Laclau's terms, Wright and Fung can be read as suggesting that such radical democratic innovation requires an 'institutionalist' (or perhaps we might coin the term 'counter-institutionalist'[21]) practice on the part of movements formed on a populist basis. Following Deleuze and Guattari, we could say that the difficulty they highlight is that of enacting a molecular deterritorialisation of existing institutions from the position of a molar collectivity. And yet the great value of the schizoanalytic perspective is that it demonstrates the extent to which every such molarity is *already* an assemblage, constituted by its lines of flight and its molecular processes, and so would suggest that such a transition need not be understood simply as the reversal of a group's constituted nature, but as an activation and intensification of its most dynamic constituent tendencies. This last phrase of mine deliberately echoes a key distinction made by Antonio Negri between 'constituent power' (the creative power of the multitude of which all true democracy is an expression) and 'constituted power' (actually existing institutions of government) (Negri 1999).

In fact what seems to be at stake here is a generalised extension of Gramsci's concept of political struggle as a 'war of position', a sort of ongoing trench or siege warfare which is distinguished from the full-frontal revolutionary assault of the classic 'war of manoeuvre' or 'war of movement'.

> The same thing happens in the art of politics as happens in military art: war of movement increasingly becomes war of position, and it can be said that a State will win a war in so far as it prepares for it minutely and technically in peacetime. The massive structures of the modem democracies, both as State organisations, and as complexes of associations in civil society, constitute for the art of politics as it were the 'trenches' and the permanent fortifications of the front in the war of position. (Gramsci 1971: 243)

Wright and Fung's formulation develops an element which is already implicit in Gramsci's: even while it is strategising against its opponents and inventing institutions of its own, a radical force must have a constructive, creative dimension. The implication of the foregoing argument is that this creative dimension cannot be expressed only through the positive, *ex nihilo* construction of new institutions; it also requires processes of molecular, transformative engagement with existing systems.

This leads to the question: what kinds of organisational form can enable radical political projects to achieve the level of creative flexibility required to engage in molecular, tactical, counter-institutionalist collaboration with such systems – in order to make 'empowered participatory democracy' a reality (Wright and Fung 2003) – without becoming disaggregated to the point where they no longer constitute 'countervailing power' to anti-democratic forces? In fact this has been the singular question of radical political organisation since the decline of the meta-individualist models of party organisation which characterised the socialist and communist movements in the first half of the twentieth century (Sassoon 1996). The defining characteristic of the New Lefts and of the new social and political movements of recent decades – from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to Occupy Wall Street (Zinn 1964, Graeber 2013) – has arguably been their attempt to deploy participatory, 'networked' and horizontal

forms of organisation and decision making. There is no shortage of 'how to' manuals deriving specific organisational lessons either from the experience of projects like Occupy (Graeber 2013) or from the philosophical arguments of thinkers such as Deleuze and Guattari.[22]

But what is perhaps more striking is the way in which such ideas and practices have begun to influence even the legatees of the early twentieth-century socialism and communism. In the early 1990s, in the wake of the collapse of the USSR, almost all of the remaining European Communist parties – including, but not limited to, the Italian, British, and German parties – both changed their name and abandoned the organisational methodology of democratic centralism in favour of some more open and pluralistic structure, allowing for public dissent from any agreed line and for a range of forms of autonomous self-organisation by members. By the mid 1990s, democratic centralism and Leninist vanguardism had been left behind by all but the tiniest and most irrelevant sects on the revolutionary Left, even amongst those who retained some of the language and symbolism of traditional communism. *Rifondazione*, the Italian 'Refounded' Communist Party, while proudly flying the hammer and sickle, did not adopt them as elements of its constitution, while they were abandoned even by the once-mighty, and for many years indefatigably Stalinist, French Communist Party. In more recent years, even political formations drawing together Trotskyist and Maoist tendencies, such as the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) in France and Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) in Greece, have accorded a degree of autonomy to their members and constituent groupings that their predecessors would have dismissed as 'anarchist' or 'liberal'. The arguments presented in this work can only tend to the conclusion that these developments are very welcome, and should be encouraged and – where feasible – extended and intensified.

In the post-Cold War era of neoliberal ascendancy, Third Way politicians arguably pursued an equivalent course to this horizontalisation of the radical left, responding to the declining efficacy of institutions grounded in the traditional labour movement not by heeding the calls of the New Left for participatory democracy, but by trying to imitate the modes of relationality typical of post-Fordist corporate culture. For the ideologues of 'corporate populism' (Barnett 2000) – notably the key communications advisers to Clinton and

Blair – focus groups, niche-marketing (Penn and Zalesne 2007) and slick media campaigns came to be considered far more effective means of determining the will of the people and making collective policy decisions than the tedious mechanisms of institutionalised democracy (Mair 2000). More recently, their successors in both the US Democratic Party and the UK Labour Party have reacted against this tendency very markedly, but in a manner that only manages to affirm the post-democratic nature of contemporary politics in those countries. Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign famously mobilised an impressive network of decentralised and largely self-organised local campaigning groups via the Internet. Much is often made of Obama's roots in the American 'community-organising' tradition of Saul Alinksy (Alinsky and Sanders 1970, Alinsky 1971). However, quite contrary to the norms of that tradition, neither Obama nor his party made any attempt to transform the membership of that campaign into an effective 'countervailing power' which could engage constructively but robustly with external forces once the campaign was concluded. In the United Kingdom, in the wake of 2010's catastrophic election defeat for the Labour government, a swathe of former New Labour ministers (including leading Blairite James Purnell,[23] former foreign secretary David Miliband,[24] the current party leader Ed Miliband,[25] and his immediate predecessor Gordon Brown[26]) have attempted to affiliate themselves with both the British and American strands of the community-organising movement, even going so far as to propose a wholesale reinvention of the Labour Party as a 'relational' party committed to building dense local networks of community organisation. What has been very striking, however, has been the fact that although this shift has been proposed as an antidote to the political disenfranchisement and alienation of the party membership, it has not been accompanied by any suggestion that the actual business of political decision making should be opened up to the membership in any way. As in the case of the Obama campaign, the democratic function of organisation is understood to extend little beyond campaigning for a particular cadre of professional politicians to be given responsibility for managing neoliberalism. In all of these cases, the forms of relationality on offer to party or community activists are in fact very finite indeed.

But is it reasonable to expect anything different from members of the techno-managerial elite in the era of neoliberal post-democracy?

Perhaps not; but this is precisely why the hegemony of that elite within our political institutions must be challenged, both from inside those institutions and from without. In some ways, the one big story of global politics since 2008 has been the complete failure of the leaderships of the mainstream Left, except in Latin America, to respond to both the crisis of neoliberalism and the upsurge and intensification of radical democratic demands. If one clear task emerges for radical democrats from the entire analysis of this book, it is this: to find ways to bridge the gap – through persuasion or force – between experimental projects like Occupy, and those institutions – unions, political parties, etc. – which might actually be able to begin to realise the implicit demand of those projects. What is that implicit demand, instantiated in the very forms and prefigurative practices of Occupy, the social forums, and the rest? It is surely, as it should be, a demand for the wholesale reform and radicalisation of a set of political institutions which are simply no longer able to serve a democratic purpose.

8

Conclusions

This book opened with an examination of the crisis of contemporary democracy and went on, eventually, to outline a general ontology of the social which argues for sociality as always a condition of creative multiplicity, a state of infinite relationality. In the process it identified 'Leviathan logic' as a particular matrix of modern liberal thought, which both informs the practice of neoliberalism and, by insisting that the only form of non-pathological collectivity is one defined by 'vertical' bonds between individuals and leader, limits the capacity of all of the legatees of the liberal tradition to think creatively about either sociality or democracy. It argued for a particular notion of collective joy as one of the distinctive hallmarks of cultures, polities and practices which can abjure this logic in favour of radical democracy, and for a politics which connects the demands of radical movements for participatory democracy with those organisations and institutions which might be capable of enacting some of them.

One issue which this line of argument raises, which has not yet been fully addressed, is the question of how my specifically *historical* account of the crisis of Fordist representative democracy in a post-Fordist epoch relates to my more general claims about the multiple, complex and dynamic nature of sociality *as such*. A fairly simple way of addressing this issue can be found, however, because at least since Marx a strong tradition has existed of arguing that certain historical developments bring into focus features of the human condition, or reality in general, which were previously obscure. From this perspective, the fact that sociality as such is always characterised by what Arendt calls 'boundless action', and the political implications of that fact, might only become fully clear in an era of globalised post-Fordism, when the tensions between capital's need to exploit the very creative force of

such boundless action come into ever starker conflict with its need to impose Leviathan logic; and when the demand for radical democracy which has been instantiated by radical movements for the past century becomes louder and more explicit than ever. Of course, this has obviously been clear to certain thinkers since long before that; but it is also apparent that there are many others to whom it has not been clear, and that for this reason it remains a potentially useful conclusion to have reached. In this final section, I will simply reflect on some of the political implications of the discussion which has led to this conclusion.

Francesca Polletta titles her extraordinary study of participatory democracy in social and political movements *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting* (2002). In some ways the entire project of *Common Ground* could be understood as an attempt to justify and elaborate upon precisely the content of this phrase: 'freedom is an endless meeting'. One of the implications of the thinking of relationality and agency which takes place in this book might well be that all individualistic conceptions of freedom – and hence possibly even all notions of 'rights' – are simply too limited, and that it is precisely the endlessness (boundlessness, infinity) of the meetings (relationality, joyous affect) in which we participate that is the only true index of a freedom that can never simply be 'ours'.

On the other hand, of course, this phrase would not be intended by Polletta or any of her subjects in the abstract way in which I am interpreting it here: 'meeting' in this phrase means, literally, a political meeting of the kind of which every movement must be composed at the basic organisational level. And yet in these terms as well, the image of the endless meeting is very useful in fleshing out the implications of the philosophical position recommended here. How would a society informed and desired by the ideas put forward in this book look different from one shaped by neoliberalism? The answer is pretty simple. There would be less work and less shopping and a hell of a lot more meetings: meetings to shape your school curriculum, meetings to organise your workplace, meetings online and meetings in person, meetings with your food co-op to decide what kind of food to grow, meetings with your tailor (who may or may not be a computer program) to talk about your next suit of clothes (because bespoke clothes would no longer be a privilege for the rich, but a necessity, since the people currently sewing your clothes in sweatshops would have better things

to do), meetings of your political party or interest group (which would actually be interesting because they would have a determinate effect on governmental policy), and so on, and so on.

Does this sound frighteningly tedious? Then let me make two remarks. One is that of course, in a society which was not organised primarily to facilitate the exploitation of wage labour, or even one in which the trade unions were stronger and the social-democratic legacy less fragile than they are today, average workloads would be much smaller than most people's currently are, so the thought of having to attend more meetings would seem far less onerous than it currently does, at least to me. Oscar Wilde reputedly remarked that it would take 'too many evenings' to realise the goal of socialism: but, as Wilde himself would have been the first to acknowledge, socialism once realised would vastly increase our available leisure time, and hence provide far more in the way of 'evenings and weekends'[1] than it would take away.

More importantly, however, I would suggest that the very reason why we habitually tend to think of meetings as boring, frustrating and disagreeable is because neoliberal post-democratic culture conspires to make them so (Graeber 2013: 273). Neoliberal culture works specifically to enhance our creative capacities while inhibiting any attempt to put them to work in a collective, political, democratic fashion: almost by definition, this makes meetings – in workplaces, communities, political organisations or civil-society bodies – tendentially impotent and hence frustrating, compared to the sense of agency we are permitted to experience daily as individual consumers and labour-market competitors. Neoliberalism works to make us fear and dislike precisely the conditions of possibility of our own creative power: if it didn't, we wouldn't buy, eat and throw away so much stuff that we don't even really want (Lawson 2009).

Of course, neoliberal culture is not always successful in its aims, and every one of us who has experienced a meeting, or a seminar, or a conference, or a class which was exciting, enabling, or even transformatory knows exactly what real democracy feels like. It feels like the moment when the meeting is as thrilling as a good party; or conversely, when the party seems as potentially meaningful and significant as a good meeting. Perhaps it feels like the moment when

the distinction between a party and a meeting seems harder to sustain, or at least unimportant.

The great dance party pioneer David Mancuso (Lawrence 2003) – whose bohemian psychedelic house parties became the template for the disco clubs of New York and then for the whole proliferation of international dance culture – once made an interesting remark to me, as we waited for a bus somewhere in north-east London. He told me that he sometimes felt that there is really just one big party going on all the time, and that the participants in actual physical parties simply try to tune into it for a while. To me this seemed a very profound idea, positing as it did a kind of virtual sociality – a zone of what Deleuze would call 'incorporeal transformation' (Deleuze 1990), Simondon would call the 'the transindividual', and what I have called 'infinite relationality' – as that of which successful concrete assemblages try to actualise the potential.

In much the same way, we might posit that in fact the whole interactive dynamic of the multitude and the mechanosphere constitutes one big meeting, one general field of agency, relation and decision, which is always going on, and which democracy is the attempt to access consciously and to stabilise temporarily in order to make things happen.[2] And from this perspective, it is the people who make such actual meetings happen, and the things which flow from them, from whom we can surely learn the most (even more than from the people who organise the parties) and to whom the rest of us might owe a certain deference in the pursuit of a democratic reality.

The subjects of Polletta's book are the participants in a number of key political movements: trade unionists, the civil-rights campaigners, the student activists of the New Left, the women's liberation movement, contemporary community organisers, and anti-capitalist activists. They have all deliberately practised, in multiple ways, inventive forms of participatory democracy which have successfully realised at least some of their movement goals, while promoting egalitarian and inventive social relations within their social spaces and institutions. There is a considerable literature on all of these subjects, although relatively little of it focusses directly on the radically democratic character of these movements. Three excellent books which do are Polletta's, Marianne Maeckelbergh's *The Will of the Many: How the Alterglobalisation Movement is Changing the Face of Democracy*, and Marc Stears'

Demanding Democracy: American Radicals in Search of a New Politics. All three of these books demonstrate with persuasive erudition the ways in which an international mosaic of radical political movements have used deliberative and participatory techniques of organisation and decision making in order to achieve major social reforms, or merely in order to enact some spectacularly impressive protests.

What these works only hint at however (although they do hint at it very clearly), and what I want to suggest much more explicitly, is that such movements should not only be admired for their efficacy in pressuring existing governmental structures to make valuable social reforms. Rather, they should be seen – as many of the participants in the Occupy movement have argued (Graeber 2013) – as the vanguard of a necessary movement for democratic reform on a par with the liberal-democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth century and the mass suffrage movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; they should be seen as experimental laboratories for the development of democratic forms which could be applicable at the level of local, municipal, regional, national and ever supra-national government. This idea is itself borne out by the history of actual experiments in co-operation and radically democratic government detailed by Curl (2009), Wainwright (2009) and Wright and Fung (2003).

This isn't far-fetched. In some places such innovations are already under way. Participatory budgeting has spread around the world from its origin in Porto Alegre, demonstrating the utility of participatory democracy in real municipal government (Wainwright 2009). A key element of the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela has been the institution of communal councils, a new stratum of local government with very small constituencies having considerable power over their localities and considerable authority to affect decisions at higher levels of government (Martinez, Fox and Farrell 2010). There is no reason why demands for similar reforms should be outside the remit of even mainstream social-democratic parties in the global North, or anywhere else, except insofar as they remain complicit with the liberal tradition's resistance to any real expression of collective agency. Indeed, the argument of this book is that such demands must become central to any movement against neoliberalism, because neoliberalism's success is partly predicated upon the inability of older democratic structures to

mobilise resistance to it. In the United Kingdom, for example, this is the fundamental obstacle to the emergence of an effective opposition to neoliberal hegemony at the time of writing (2013): the leadership of the mainstream 'centre-left' continues to delude itself that it can use the existing structures of government inherited from the moment of Fordism in order to implement reforms which can destabilise and ultimately negate neoliberal hegemony, while in reality politically mobilising, at the affective level, only the resentment and conservatism of the British people towards the social consequences of economic liberalisation. The problem is that this just can't work: no government will be able to take on neoliberalism without mobilising the creative force of a highly complex, variegated and mobile population and facilitating the expression of that social complexity in ways which would require radical institutional reforms.

Of course, it may be quite unreasonable of me or anyone else to expect our political leaders to undertake such a task in a vacuum. At the time of writing, I suspect that the level of inchoate frustration with neoliberalism and its consequences is such that there really would be a viable opportunity to popularise such a politics open to any political leadership with the courage to take it. But it may be that such leadership – or rather, a movement mature enough for 'leadership' to crystallise within it and emerge from it, which also has the capacity to attract large sections of the population – itself does not or cannot really exist yet, after several decades of neoliberalism's devastatingly successful 'war of position'. It may be that only a set of diverse, yet convergent molecular currents, such as those which produced the Women's Movement and the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, could create the cultural conditions of possibility for such a movement. Perhaps such a transformation is already under way – there may right now be pockets of social and aesthetic experimentation which look isolated and irrelevant but whose intensification, dispersal and interaction under new conditions might quickly produce radical social change.

I think we know roughly what some of the hallmarks of such a cultural shift would be: a scepticism towards consumerism; anti-capitalism, not in the sense of a necessary determination to abolish commercial society, but of an implacable refusal to concede authority to institutions whose primary goal is capital accumulation; a renewal

of the feminist demand for a democratisation (meaning not just an equalisation, but a general and open-ended *problematisation*) of sexual relations; a celebration of 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' (Bhabha 1996) which refuses to concede that the pleasure of cosmopolitan culture can or should be only accessible to the rich or the white-skinned; a radical and experimental anti-individualism which is never tempted by the lure of conformist communitarianism; an environmentalism which wants the Earth and all that's in it to be more, not less, than it is now.

Of course, this kind of wish list is not new, and is certainly not much different from that proffered by other writers with similar sources and motivations, such as in J.K. Gibson-Graham's call for a 'postcapitalist politics' (2006). If I can hope to have shown anything remotely novel in this book, then it is this: that the present crisis of political democracy is more systemic and fundamental than any of its liberal diagnosticians can allow; that the critique of individualism remains not an archaic, but a still indispensable element of a contemporary progressive politics; that this is true even if such a politics is conceived only in terms of its democratic aspirations, rather than in terms of its commitment to 'communism', 'socialism' or the traditions of the labour movement (I don't seek to distance myself from those positions, only to point out that one does not have to adopt them in order to agree with every argument in this book); that anti-individualism in no way equates with conservative communitarianism, even of a 'revolutionary' kind. Hopefully that's enough for one book.

Notes

Preface

1. The Trilateral Commission is a self-appointed consultative body of international corporate and governmental leaders. See www.trilateral.org.

Chapter 1

1. Although Rancière (1998) doesn't hyphenate the term 'postdemocracy'.
2. The term 'participatory' will be used frequently here, as it normally is in discussions of this kind. It is worth trying to achieve some clarity about what we mean by it. Broadly speaking, 'participatory' forms of government can be so characterised to the extent that they extend opportunities for all citizens to take part directly in legislative decision making, rather than simply delegating those decisions to a body of elected full-time representatives. This is normally achieved through the empowerment of assemblies in which all members of a given constituency have the right to take part, assemblies which must be ultimately federated in some way if they are to contribute to the government of a large population. Typically such assemblies, for practical reasons, can only operate on a small local scale – the 'neighbourhood', or some such – although in theory they can be federated on any scale.
3. Broadly speaking, by 'vertical' we mean social or organisational relations characterised by strict hierarchies and lines of command, or at least by a clear distinction between political leaders, legislators, executive, and representatives on the one hand, and the people whom they lead or govern on the other. By 'horizontal' we mean social or organisational relations characterised by egalitarianism, shared responsibility and decision making, a minimum of hierarchy, and an emphasis on whole-group participation over the delegation of decision making to representatives or leaders.
4. Political projects, cultural events, etc. can all now much more easily attract participants without the intervention of established media simply by setting up Facebook groups. While it is already a cliché to observe that joining such a group at the click of a mouse is no substitute for actual face-to-face engagement, it is also clear that the latter is in many instances facilitated by the former.
5. See also Anderson (1998) and Hall and Jacques (1989).
6. See Readings (1997).
7. Lyotard derives this term from Wittgenstein (1953).
8. For invaluable discussions of the impacts of these changes upon the subjectivities of post-Fordist workers – elite and non-elite – see Sennett (1998) and Botlanski and Chiapello (2005: 273–342).

9. http://womansuffragememorabilia.com.
10. In fact this was already an emergent trope by 1964, when Kubrick's film *Dr Strangelove* featured a reference to Soviet public's 'grumbl[ing] for more nylons': a telling and carefully chosen reference which would have carried powerful echoes of wartime austerity for many viewers, as nylon stockings were one of the most symbolic 'little luxuries' which the war had made scarce in Britain. Later in the war, nylon stockings and chocolate were among the gifts with which American soldiers stationed in the United Kingdom were often reputed to win the sexual favours of local girls. (A whole history of the political agency of feminine desire might be written on the basis of these observations …) By the early 1960s, nylon stockings had become commonplace once again in the United Kingdom, but not in the USSR.
11. This account of the effects of capitalism can be understood in terms both of Schumpeter's concept of 'creative destruction' as the basic process and effect of capitalism (1950) and of Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of capital as a 'deterritorialising' force (1988).
12. For a fascinating contemporary exploration of this theme, see Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos (2008).
13. Of course this is merely a way of restating Marx's famous dictum, from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, that men make their own history, but not under self-selected circumstances. But my way of formulating it here adds to this a certain observation about the nature of hegemony – that it enables the hegemonic groups to play a more active role in selecting those circumstances than others.
14. But was this possibility always implicit in Foucault's work, from his early invocation of the medieval 'ship of fools' in *The History of Madness* to his final reflections on the 'ethics' of self-fashioning? Or did the romanticism of the earlier moment give way to the pessimism of *Discipline and Punish*, to re-emerge in that late work only in a wholly individualised mode? Answering this question is surely a matter of interpretation, and beyond the scope of the present work.
15. For some very useful and insightful analyses of this whole complex of issues and many others see Dean (2002, 2009).
16. Perhaps this demonstrates that the Soviet system was indeed, as some have claimed, a kind of 'state capitalism', never able to free itself from the implacable logic of accumulation; perhaps it merely testifies to the danger of aping capitalist methods too closely, even for a workers' state. If nothing else, as we have already remarked, it demonstrates that a conception of democracy which assumes the uniformity of the *socius* is doomed to failure.
17. A good example would be the patronising and ultimately ahistorical tone taken by 'Property is Theft', the BBC documentary about London squatters in the 1970s, broadcast in October 2007: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0074s62. Another more extreme example would be Nicolas Sarkozy's generic dismissal of '1968' and its legacy as the source of contemporary France's social problems: www.liberation.fr/

tribune/0101101085-la-haine-de-68; www.nytimes.com/2008/04/29/world/europe/29iht-france.4.12440504.html.

18. This is precisely the problem with John Keane's description of the emergent international political formation as 'monitory democracy' (Keane 2009: 686–95). Keane's resolutely positivist description of 'democracy' as more or less any set of even nominally representative institutions, while a useful corrective to all ungrounded abstractions, ultimately ignores the points made by such diverse commentators as Crouch and Hardt and Negri, to the effect that the complex of interrelated governmental institutions which he describes in those terms ultimately works to hinder the possibility of actual collective decisions ever being made at least as much as it facilitates them.

Chapter 2

1. I make no claim that this is an original term, although I haven't been able to determine an origin for its usage, which goes back several decades at least.
2. An excellent history can be found in the appendix to Simondon (2005).
3. This is a very different account of 'the individual' to that offered by Deleuze (1994: 257–61; Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 252–3) which insists that the individual, unlike the 'Self', is protean, divisible, and multiple. Conceptually, I think that my account and Deleuze's are entirely compatible: terminologically, there is an obvious problem with Deleuze's insistence on retaining the word 'individual' given that, as I have explained, its etymology is inseparable from an idea of indivisibility, and indeed from the bourgeois ideas of property; for this reason I prefer to use terms such as 'singularity' or 'person' where Deleuze uses 'individual'.
4. Where does psychoanalysis fit into this history? This remains debatable both inside and outside of the various psychoanalytic traditions. On the one hand, critics such as Foucault and his followers posit psychoanalysis as the ultimate conclusion of the individualist tradition, positing the interior self as the absolute site of authentic experience and insisting on an obsession with it as the only route to mental health (Foucault 1978). On the other hand, there has always been an interpretation of Freud according to which the logical aim of his insistence on the normality, everydayness and typicality of 'neurotic' symptoms and unconscious desires is to put an end to analysands' narcissistic belief in their own uniqueness, and according to which the Unconscious (the *id,* which is simply to say 'the It') is never simply an 'inner self'. The Lacanian insistence on the 'extimate' nature of subjectivity (Fink 1995) arguably constitutes a deliberate and explicit attempt to develop this position, while the dominant tradition in British clinical practice, object relations, has always insisted on the absolutely constitutive nature of interpersonal relations for the subject of analysis; see Klein (1987).
5. For a fascinating discussion of the ideological nature of individualism see Bensayag (1998).

6. I encountered this idea in particularly brute form during one of my earliest experiences as a university teacher, when a first-year undergraduate confidently asserted that individualised competition was 'natural', because 'that's what cavemen were like', as he had learned 'on the telly'.
7. I will argue later that this is essentially a description of 'democracy' as conceived by Laclau and Mouffe.
8. It would be fair to say that the presupposition of inherent human competitiveness is not really attributable to Rawls, although he has no strong basis on which to refute it, and I would contend that this remains the fatal flaw of his philosophical system. In recent years Paul Patton – best known as an authority on the work of Gilles Deleuze – has offered some fascinating reflections on Rawls (Patton 2007) which arguably present his work as the radical limit point of a liberalism which is on the point of becoming something more than liberalism (communism? radical democracy?).
9. For a fascinating discussion of MacPherson's thesis, see Balibar (2002).
10. It is possible, and perhaps desirable, to understand the vicissitudes of the liberal tradition as expressing nothing more abstract than the interests of the commercial elite as modern capitalism developed. This can be done by examining the development of actual policy programmes, such as the Victorian poor laws, significant political documents, such as the US constitution, and popular political discourse in newspapers and pamphlets, while largely ignoring the grand statements that professional philosophers work with. However we can also trace the genealogy of 'classical' liberalism through the contribution made to it by key theorists such as Locke, Mill, Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham. A work which combines both approaches admirably is Loserdo (2011). I say 'nothing more abstract than the interests of the commercial elite', but it is important to acknowledge that such 'interests' are themselves always somewhat abstract and difficult to define: they are always 'virtual' – as Deleuze, or Bergson, might say – only becoming 'actual' when expressed as specific demands. This is an important conceptual issue which I hope to develop further in later work.
11. I use the term 'articulation' here in the way that Ernesto Laclau uses it, to designate a connection between terms, ideas or political demands which is not natural or inevitable, but which is made as a deliberate political intervention. See Gilbert (2008b). For discussion of the politics of the New Right, see Hall (1988).
12. In the United Kingdom in particular, 'free festival' culture was subject to brutal suppression in 1985. See McKay (1996).
13. Examples would include the policing of the Genoa G8 summit in 2001 and the treatment of protesters against cuts to higher education funding in London in 2010.
14. 'Performative' in J.L. Austin's sense: see Austin (1962).
15. www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/mar/21/jobseekers-bill-cait-reilly?INTCMP=SRCH.
16. For a useful contemporary discussion of the effects of social inequality, see Wilkinson and Pickett (2009).

17. Consider, for example, the strict laws passed in Elizabethan England against the mobility and anonymity of the growing numbers of 'masterless men': see Beier (1985).

Chapter 3

1. While some of the founding philosophical figures of neoliberalism, such as Friedrich Hayek, may have seen themselves more in the classic liberal tradition, its more pragmatic and effective manifestations, particularly in the 'new public management', have clearly tended towards an authoritarian and anti-democratic approach.
2. Of course, this was the body as imagined by the cultures in question, rather than as would be understood by contemporary biology.
3. Participation in Athenian democracy was, it must be remembered, restricted to free men, in a city in which the majority of the population were slaves. Nonetheless Plato's condemnation of it remains highly relevant to our concerns since his criticisms would apply equally to any system of open, public, collective decision making.
4. The key logical operations of the primary process, according to Freud, are 'condensation' (whereby diverse and often unrelated ideas, feelings, words and images become arbitrarily 'condensed' into specific phrases, dream scenes, or symptoms) and 'displacement' (whereby feelings which are really directed towards one object are experienced as being directed towards another, because directing them towards the second object creates fewer problems).
5. Or more accurately, the site at which the subject's multiple ego ideals are condensed into a singular agency.
6. So, for example, female genitalia are understood as composed of a 'failed' penis, the clitoris, and a mere absence, the vagina; the possibility of understanding their actual complex structure is simply foreclosed (Maccormack 2009).
7. Although it was clearly a pressing concern for their first great intellectual reference point, Antonio Gramsci.
8. For a more comprehensive account of Laclau's theory, see Marchart (2007).
9. It is easy for readers of Laclau's latest work to become confused here, given the much lower degree of attention that he gives to the 'institutionalist' aspect of politics, and his tendency to refer to 'populism' as if it were a manifest reality. However, it is clear from an attentive reading that 'populism' for Laclau is ultimately a particular *dimension* of all political processes, rather than an entity which is ever likely to be encountered in a 'pure' form.

Chapter 4

1. www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2003/sep/30/labourconference.labour5; www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1354640/Blair-to-end-one-size-fits-all-state-schooling.html; cf. David Cameron using the same language:

www.number10.gov.uk/news/prime-ministers-speech-on-modern-public-service/.

2. Hobbes does try to situate his philosophy within a nominally Christian framework: failure to do so would have been professional suicide at the time when he was writing. But his work clearly marks a break with church teachings and has rarely if ever been considered compatible with any religious teaching.
3. For an excellent discussion of multiple and competing readings of Marx, see Hutnyk (2004).
4. For example, this is effectively, and sometimes explicitly, the position taken by right-wing 'revisionist' historians of the English Civil War (e.g. Adamson 2007, 2008; Russell 1990).
5. The work of the English philosopher John Gray (2003), who argues that the complexity of human societies is such that any political intervention leads to so many unintended consequences that it is probably almost always a complete waste of time, could be read as the logical conclusion of this line of thinking; although Gray's tone and reference points situate him more probably in the tradition of conservative scepticism, his lack of reverence for tradition and implicit materialism would make possible an interesting reading of his position as a kind of 'Marxism without optimism'.
6. It would seem unkind to pick on any one example of Marx being characterised as an 'economic determinist', given the very widespread circulation of this account, especially in undergraduate-level introductions to social, political and cultural theory.
7. Derrida (1994) would go on to consider the metaphorics of 'haunting' in Marxian thought in some detail.
8. Of course, if we were using the terms differently, we might emphasise that for Laclau 'populism' is partly defined by the construction of a horizontal chain of equivalence between disparate demands and a horizontal 'dichotomic' frontier between the people and their antagonists; but the important point for us here is that the defining difference between populism and institutionalism is that in the former case, the collective is bound together by the radical investment of its members in the leader, while in the latter, the collective is, in a sense, its own object of cathexis.
9. This may well have been in part because the book was written during the period (1973–1989) when it was first becoming apparent that the Fordist capitalism against which much of their earlier polemics had been directed was giving way to a new, itself more 'rhizomatic', form of capitalism.
10. Although this hasn't stopped some of Laclau's Deleuzian critics from trying: e.g. Robinson and Tormey (2009).
11. There is an orthodox Marxist response to this analysis, which is to argue that all of these socio-cultural changes are epiphenomenal, that they obfuscate the fact that structurally Marx's predictions continue to hold good as increasing sections of the population become socio-economically, if not culturally, 'proletarianised', and that they largely derive from the intensification of processes which Marx long ago identified as typical of and endogenous to capitalism: individualisation, commodity fetishism,

alienation, and so on. This is all true; but it does not alter the fact that Marx did not predict that these tendencies would interrupt the general tendency of capitalist development to crystallise, intensify and polarise class conflict.

12. Properly speaking, 'autonomism' is a relatively late term to describe this tendency which was known for a long time as *operaismo*, literally 'workerism'. See Wright (2002).
13. For expert reflections on the autonomist legacy, see Read (2003) and Thoburn (2003).
14. To be fair to any potential critics of Hardt and Negri, it isn't at all clear that the 'transcendent' mode of sovereignty was anything like as uniformly ubiquitous in pre-medieval philosophy or societies as they seem to assume.

Chapter 5

1. For an excellent discussion on the importance of crowd theory to social psychology, see Blackman (2012).
2. This need not *necessarily* imply that those cures are ineffective.
3. Ultimately I can only appeal to readers to refer to their own experiences to verify my preference for the latter position: did you really fancy or want to be every person from whom you ever picked up a new mannerism, turn of phrase or intonation?
4. For a fascinating discussion of these issues, see Gibbs (2010).
5. This is the published English translation, although the original French title is *Le lien affectif*, which today would almost certainly be translated as *The Affective Tie*.
6. This is one of the points made by contemporary advocates of 'continuum concept' parenting, although it is not clear that their commitment to reproducing 'tribal' parenting techniques in contemporary urban contexts is either realistic or effective: see Liedloff (1975). For a fascinating account of early-life psychology which is compatible with a 'molecular' perspective, see Stern (1985). I would also like to add that my own experience of child-rearing strongly suggests that children make marked developmental leaps when brought into contact with other children who are older than them, but yet too close in age to be their siblings, suggesting that the familial separation of the nuclear-family model is far from optimal for human development.
7. For expert introductory and expository accounts of Simondon's thought, see Combes (2013) and Toscano (2006). For further advanced explorations of his concepts and their implications see Manning (2009, 2013).
8. All translations of Simondon are the author's own.
9. To be entirely accurate 'communication' is one of the terms that Derrida (1981) problematises most successfully. He persuasively suggests that the term 'dissemination' might better convey the complex distribution of effects produced by the simultaneous success and failure of every communicative act.

10. To explore Deleuze and Guattari's approach to these issues fully would necessitate a close engagement with their account of the multiple 'regimes of signs' which can exist and co-exist in different societies (Deleuze and Guattari 1988).
11. The only acknowledgement of this important translation issue that I have found in any of the Anglophone scholarship on Levinas is in Caygill (2002: 18).
12. Which is what a graduate student from an elite British university recently told me Butler believes.
13. www.carbontradewatch.org/publications/carbon-trading-how-it-works-and-why-it-fails.html.
14. It may be that, for all of the problems with his model of collectivity, Freud's understanding of the drives and the unconscious is in fact a perfect description of the working of genetic and evolutionary imperatives in human consciousness and culture. Such an idea tends to be resisted by cultural and social theorists because of a justified fear that any 'evolutionary psychology' implies a return to those forms of 'sociobiology' which simply legitimate and normalise traditional forms of masculinity and femininity, arguing for example that women cannot help but seek out dominant partners while men cannot help but pursue multiple mates. In fact a properly Freudian and Darwinian response to this claim would be to respond that evolutionary forces may produce a certain tendency towards such behaviours at the level of the drives, but that there is no more need to act upon this tendency, or to regard doing so as socially acceptable, than there is to act upon the similar drive to consume sugar and salt – which humans enjoy because they were rare in their original evolutionary environments – in quantities which are potentially lethal in modern urban environments.
15. For a different approach to the same project, see Wheeler (2006). See also Chesters and Welsh (2006).
16. See www.greennewdealgroup.org.

Chapter 6

1. In particular, Brian Massumi's landmark essay 'The Autonomy of Affect' (2002), which has had a huge impact on cultural theory and media theory, cites Simondon in some detail.
2. Indeed, this identification may have no ground or substance beyond its capacity to represent the groupness of the group to itself: this is essentially Laclau's understanding of the function of the 'empty signifier' (1996).
3. Simondon is not completely rigorous in his differentiation between the 'subconscious' and the 'unconscious' here, occasionally using the terms interchangeably.
4. For an expert exploration of Simondon's theory of affect and relationality, see Venn (2010).
5. It is notable that conventional English translations of this work do not differentiate between emotion and affect, simply using the term 'emotion' to translate Spinoza's *affectus* (e.g. Spinoza 2000). This is understandable,

particularly given that there is probably no better translation of 'emotion' into Latin. However, this doesn't alter the fact that the modern concept of 'emotion' does not map perfectly onto the Latin *affectus* and certainly does not adequately render Spinoza's understanding of the term.

6. e.g. www.ehow.com/about_4896045_what-tone-voice.html.
7. For an interesting discussion of the implications of mirror-neurone theory, which suggests that it implies that what distinguishes humans from other animals is the ability to be asocial, see Virno (2008).
8. There were of course philosophical works on music produced in France at this time, such as Attali (1985), but none of the major philosophers of the moment other than Deleuze and Guattari made any substantial engagement with music or musicality.
9. From a contemporary perspective, it is particularly interesting to note that it was the moment of the new Fordist worker which saw the birth of the prohibition paradigm, outlawing with varying degrees of success the sale and use of first alcohol and then a range of other intoxicants.
10. 'Schizoanalysis' is the name given by Deleuze and Guattari to their shared conceptual approach, but also by Guattari to his entire philosophical project, including his solo writings, and his clinical practice derived from his work as a doctor and therapist at the pioneering *La Borde* clinic in Cour-Cheveny in France. The term has a complex genesis and set of resonances, but is perhaps most simply introduced as follows. The name 'schizoanalysis' refers firstly to the proposition that the psychoanalytic embargo on attempting to treat psychoses such as schizophrenia could be successfully overcome if a properly sociological and materialist account of the human psyche, free from any liberal, bourgeois or individualist assumptions about the nature of the mind, the individual or the group, could be developed. In its earliest usage, the terms also seems to imply that the unit of analysis will not be individual psyches, but instead 'schizzes', singular points of experience at which flows or fluxes of experience are broken, cut, interrupted. They might also be described as moments of affective state change occurring in complex systems which do not simply coincide with individual human organisms but which may partially or wholly include such organisms as well as various other organic and non-organic elements. See Deleuze and Guattari (1983 and 1988), Guattari (2011).
11. This is not to say the Brennan is wrong in her interpretation of Lacan, whose work she treats with great intelligence and erudition.
12. There are so many possible examples that it almost embarrassing to single one out, but the American rock band The Strokes would be a good example.
13. Laclau and Derrida's work on the ontological and phenomenological status of rhetorical figures – in particular metaphor and metonymy (Derrida 1982: 207–71, Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Laclau 1999: 237–47) – as well as the contrast between their occasional stress on the constitutive role of metonymic processes in meaning formation and the alternative emphasis placed by Lacan and Žižek (1989: 172–3) on the constitutive function of metaphor, might point towards a 'deconstructive' or 'metonymic'

understanding of identification and becoming which would be situated somewhere between the two poles of this continuum. Regrettably there is no space to explore this issue further in the present work.

14. Deleuze's French term *sociétés de contrôle* is variously translated as 'societies of control' and 'control societies'.
15. At the time of writing (July 2013), prominent musicians such as Thom Yorke have begun to protest publicly at the very poor remuneration offered by Spotify to new artists. See www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/jul/21/spotify-bad-for-music-debate?.
16. These two slogans have actually featured in my own children's early-years education.
17. www.johnmajor.co.uk/page1019.html.
18. Macmurray's fascinating ideas are not alien to many of those propounded in the present volume, but they exercised no discernible influence whatsoever over New Labour policy in government.
19. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-19792070.
20. www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/nov/21/arnie-graf-labour-party-miliband.
21. The East London Communities Organisation and the larger body to which it gave rise, London Citizens. Each of these organisations still exists and has become a member of the larger one which it helped to form.
22. Hardt and Negri's positing of an irreducible surplus is very close in tone to Derrida's early exposition of the logic of the 'supplement' (1976), although they do not refer to it.
23. Cf. Nancy (2010: 33).
24. For a detailed discussion of how existing good practice could become the basis for a democratic reform of UK schooling, see Fielding and Ross (2010).

Chapter 7

1. But it should be noted that the 'Monroe doctrine', justifying continuous American intervention in Latin America, long pre-dated the Cold War.
2. www.nature.com/news/2008/080411/full/news.2008.751.html.
3. The key disagreements between 'Marxists' – above all Marxist–Leninists – and 'anarchists' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries revolved around the extent to which organisational forms did or did not have to prefigure the egalitarian relations of a putative socialist society (Bakunin 1990).
4. See, for example, Lessing (1962).
5. Freud's most developed engagement with this issue is his famous essay 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', in which he purports to identify constitutive motivations in the human psyche that are more fundamental than the search for pleasure. In fact Freud's analysis never does go beyond the pleasure principle, but rather undertakes a sort of anatomy of the basic mechanics of pleasure, understood in terms of the satisfaction of two basic 'drives': 'eros', the erotic drive to connect with others; 'thanatos', the death drive, which seeks to return the nervous system to a zero

state of excitation. Importantly, neither of these is presented as having the potential to transform the subject through any kind of permanent extension of its capacities; the most that either can achieve is a definitely temporary satisfaction of a need, that need or sense of lack being itself the normal way in which the drive in question is experienced by the subject.

6. The reader will very likely object that there are many examples of solitude as pleasure. I would reply that this is only true insofar as our conception of solitude and 'sociality' is restricted to the human. If instead 'sociality' is understood in terms of the expanded conception offered by the ecology of the multitude, then most 'solitary' pleasures – quiet enjoyment of landscape or plant life, meditation, electronic gaming, etc. – can be understood as in fact involving intense connections with non-human or supra-human elements of existence. I would defend the assertion that there could be no pleasure in true solitude; but, as the philosophy of finitude has taught us, the only true solitude is death (cf. Derrida 2008).
7. Barthes' concept of *jouissance* (1975) should not be confused with Lacan's: they are related, but they are not the same at all. *Jouissance* for Lacan is gendered, at least insofar as he posits a specific domain of 'feminine *jouissance*' (1998); Barthe's formulation, by contrast, identifies *jouissance* as 'neuter', and something very close to an experience of Deleuze and Guattari's as 'body without organs' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988).
8. Bishop's understanding of 'antagonism' is problematic, as it seems to conflate Laclau and Mouffe's ontological understanding of antagonism as a name for the constitutive negativity which characterises all social relations with Mouffe's positing of 'agonism' (2000) – political disagreement which does *not* work to deny the identity of the opponent as radical antagonism does – as a characteristic feature of specifically democratic relations.
9. A key point to understand here is that Nike's marketing strategy can't be understood simply in terms of the symbolic capital of its products – which do literally have to feel a certain way for that strategy to be effective – or in terms of the marketing of an 'identity' or even a 'lifestyle', because the commonalities of experience which it offers are both too specific and not coherent enough to be understood in those terms.
10. e.g. www.alchemyfestival.co.uk; https://www.greengathering.org.uk; www.sunrisefestivals.co.uk.
11. www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm.
12. St John clearly experiences no such *ennui* at the trance raves he loves, but the author has spoken to many informants who have; Jones makes a very similar report on Burning Man.
13. Does anyone believe that anarcho-punks – or, for example, British Trotskyist militants in the 1980s – have actually changed anything?
14. It is notable that the popular journalistic presentation of the music against which punk reacted normally reduces it to the most pompous, masculinist and corporate of the big stadium-filling rock bands – Pink Floyd, ELO, etc. – whereas clearly these artists were only elements of a continuous assemblage which included, amongst others, Can, Julie Driscoll and Cymande.

15. I confess that this formulation owes something to the thought of Alain Badiou, with which this book is otherwise notably and deliberately unengaged. There is no space for an exposition here; but in brief, I find Badiou's theory of ethicality as defined by 'fidelity' to a singular 'event' (2001) to be quite suggestive and useful when applied solely to the domain of artistic practice, but to be at best useless, at worst dangerous, when transposed to the other fields to which Badiou tries to apply it, such as love or politics.
16. A group of undergraduates recently asked me why the wholesale capture of top-flight UK football by Rupert Murdoch's Sky Television had been met with so little protest by fans in the 1990s: I found it difficult to answer, except to say that this was symptomatic of the hegemony of neoliberalism, and could not have occurred in a time or place wherein that hegemony was very secure; the contrast with the German experience, wherein fan ownership of clubs has become an established norm, is very striking.
17. Pressure groups such as Compass in the United Kingdom or ATTAC in France, for example.
18. The current project of neoliberal governance to enforce 'austerity' on European populations, and to intensify precarity in the labour market all over the world, should be understood partly in these terms: the 'democratic surge' of the 1960s and 1970s taught capital a lesson about the dangers of an over-secure population which it has certainly not forgotten yet.
19. For example in the United Kingdom, the period of neoliberal hegemony has coincided almost perfectly with a period when Labour leaders have seemed incapable of expressing or experiencing such sympathy with anything but the most conservative or reactionary tendencies in the wider culture. In the 1960s, Harold Wilson professed his love for the Beatles, Tony Benn attended the *Dialectics of Liberation* conference and Roy Jenkins sought to liberalise British society. By contrast, Jenkins's successor as home secretary – Jim Callaghan – became the first of a series of Labour home secretaries to reject out of hand expert advice recommending a relaxation of the laws prohibiting possession of cannabis, and went on, as Labour leader, to launch an ideological assault on the progressive education movement. New Labour's appalling embrace of the most reactionary forms of popular culture at the end of the 1990s was well documented (Gilbert 1998), while Blair's successors as Labour leader to date have both been notorious for their lack of cultural interests outside politics and their apparent bemusement by most manifestations of popular culture, commercial or experimental.
20. See also Hirst (1993) and Westall (2011).
21. Obviously this is not an entirely new term; but its historic usages have tended to imply a generalised opposition to institutions, rather than a project to institutionalise practices that are different from those currently institutionalised, which is more or less what is meant here.
22. http://micropolitiques.collectifs.net/.
23. www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/feb/19/james-purnell-retrain-community-organiser.
24. http://davidmiliband.net/2011/09/movement-for-change/.

25. www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/01/graf-obama-labour-miliband.
26. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10750077.

Conclusions

1. As the Gang of Four would have it (in their song 'Return the Gift').
2. One big party, one big meeting: both phrases obviously evoke the Industrial Workers' of the World's call for 'One Big Union', and this is not inappropriate.

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