MARX'S MOLE IS DEAD! Globalisation and Communication

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Every tool is a weapon if you hold it right.
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Men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and then it turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name.
William Morris

Drawing on their book Empire, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri show how the resistance of the working class has prefigured the globalisation of capital. Now, they contend, we face a new, universal order that accepts no boundaries or limits — Empire. The local focus of a nostalgic Left is in this situation both false and damaging.

In our book,[1] we propose a single concept, Empire, which is meant to name the political form of globalisation. Our primary question is, what is the political constitution of global order?

We use Empire to name the new form of sovereignty, a new form of political rule. Many argue that the globalisation of capitalist production and exchange means that economic relations have become more autonomous from political controls, and consequently that political sovereignty has declined. Some celebrate this new era as the liberation of the capitalist economy from the restrictions and distortions that political forces have imposed on it; others lament it as the closing of the institutional channels through which workers and citizens can influence or contest the cold logic of capitalist profit. It is certainly true that in step with the processes of globalisation the sovereignty of nation states, while still important, has progressively declined. The primary factors of production and exchange — money, technology, people and goods — move with increasing ease across national boundaries; hence the nation state has less and less power to regulate these flows and impose its authority over the economy. Even the most dominant nation states should no longer be thought of as supreme and sovereign au-

1 Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press 2000

thorities, neither outside nor even within their own borders. *The declining sovereignty of nation states, however, does not mean that sovereignty as such has declined*! Throughout the contemporary transformations, political controls, state functions and regulatory mechanisms continue to rule the realm of economic and social production and exchange. Our basic hypothesis, then, is that sovereignty has taken a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule. This new global form of sovereignty is what we call Empire.

We reject two hypotheses:

1. that there is a single, locatable source that dictates global order, that rules the globe: Washington, New York, Geneva, Tokyo (conspiracy theory);
2. that global order arises spontaneously from the anarchic interplay of global exchanges, from market forces (invisible hand) — in effect that there is not global order, only an economic dynamic that has finally freed itself from the regulation of the nation states and all other political fetters.

Between these two extremes we try to read the contemporary global political order as a mixed constitution. Mixed constitution is the term that Polybius uses to describe (and celebrate) the ancient Roman Empire. The ancient Roman Empire was a mixed constitution, according to Polybius, in that it brought together in a single constitution all three primary forms of government: monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. In other words, in Empire monarchic, aristocratic and democratic powers all function together. Today, it sometimes appears that there is a single monarchic power that rules the world: during the Gulf War, for example, it seemed that the Pentagon was a monarchic global power; at other times the IMF might appear that way; at others Hollywood? On the other hand, sometimes it appears that aristocratic forces rule the world. Not the rule of the one but the rule of the few. Transnational corporations are aristocratic in this sense, as are often the nation states. Finally, there are those "democratic" powers, those that at least claim to represent the people. Nation states often fill this role too on the global scene, but the most interesting and complex democratic forces in Empire are the NGOs. In any case, a theory of mixed constitution allows us to recognise all of these powers within one coherent global constitution, but does not force us to claim these forces are uniform or univocal. A theory of mixed constitution is a theory of difference within the constitution that allows for various separations of powers within the framework of a single order. The challenge then for our notion of the contemporary Empire as a mixed constitution is to discover what the various powers are and how

they interact and negotiate with or dominate each other, in concert and in conflict. That's the difficult part. Mixed constitution only names the problematic; it doesn't really describe the dynamics of rule. But I hope it gives you a first approach to the framework in which we conceive Empire.

The declining sovereignty of nation states and their increasing inability to regulate economic and cultural changes is in fact one of the primary symptoms of the coming of Empire. The sovereignty of the nation state was the cornerstone of the imperialisms that European powers constructed throughout the modern era. By "Empire", however, we understand something altogether different from "imperialism". The boundaries defined by the modern system of nation states were fundamental to European colonialism and economic expansion: the territorial boundaries of the nation delimited the centre of power from which rule was exerted over external, foreign territories through a system of channels and barriers that alternately facilitated and obstructed the flows of production and circulation. Imperialism was really an extension of the sovereignty of the European nation states beyond their own boundaries. Eventually nearly all the world's territories could be parcelled out and the entire world map could be coded in European colours: red for British territory, blue for French, green for Portuguese and so forth. Whatever modern sovereignty took root, it constructed a transcendent Leviathan that overarched its social domain and imposed hierarchical territorial boundaries, both to police the purity of its own identity and to exclude all that was other.

NO LIMITS

The passage to Empire emerges from the twilight of modern sovereignty. In contrast to imperialism, Empire establishes no territorial centre of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a *decentered* and *deterritorialising* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command. The distinct national colours of the imperialist map of the world have merged and blended in the imperial global rainbow.

We should emphasise that we use Empire here not as a *metaphor*, which would require demonstration of the resemblances between today's world order and the Empires of Rome, China, the Americas and so forth, but rather as a *concept*, which calls primarily for a theoretical approach. The concept of Empire is characterised fundamentally by a lack of boundaries: Empire's rule has no limits.

First and foremost, then, the concept of Empire poses a regime that effectively encompasses the spatial totality, or really that rules over the entire "civilised" world. No territorial boundaries limit its reign. Second, the concept of Empire presents itself not as a historical regime originating in conquest, but rather as an order that effectively suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity. From the perspective of Empire, this is the way things will always be and the way they were always meant to be. In other words, Empire presents its rule not as a transitory moment in the movement of history, but as a regime with no temporal boundaries and in this sense outside of history or at the end of history. Third, the rule of Empire operates on all registers of the social order extending down to the depths of the social world. Empire not only manages a territory and a population, but also creates the very world it inhabits. It not only regulates human interactions, but also seeks directly to rule over human nature. The object of its rule is social life in its entirety, and thus Empire presents the paradigmatic form of biopower. Finally, although the practice of Empire is continually bathed in blood, the concept of Empire is always dedicated to peace — a perpetual and universal peace outside of history.

A METHODOLOGICAL POINT

The relationship between Italian politics and French philosophy is an interesting one, specifically the relationship between the Italian tradition of *operaismo* and *autonomia* on one hand and the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze on the other. There is a central point of commonality here and that is a methodological point, or really an axiom of research.

On Deleuze's side, this axiom is that desire is active and power is reactive. Or rather, with respect to power, *"La résistence est première"*. Resistance is temporally and ontologically prior to power.

Operaismo builds on Marx's claim that capital reacts to the struggles of the working class; the working class is active and capital reactive.

Technological development: Where there are strikes, machines will follow. "It would be possible to write a whole history of the inventions made since 1830 for the sole purpose of providing capital with weapons against working-class revolt" (*Capital*, Vol. 1, Chapter 15, Section 5).

Political development: The factory legislation in England was a response to the working class struggle over the length of the working day. "Their formulation, official recognition and proclamation by the State were the result of a long class struggle" (*Capital*, Vol. 1, Chapter 10, Section 6).

Operaismo takes this as its fundamental axiom: the struggles of the working class *precede* and *prefigure* the successive re-structurations of capital.

We will present an example of this methodology or this axiom in the relationship between social struggles and globalisation, or rather, the relationship between international cycles of struggles and capitalist globalisation.

CALL TO GLOBALITY

Flirting with Hegel, one could say that the construction of Empire is good *in itself* but not *for itself*. One of the most powerful operations of the modern imperialist power structures was to drive wedges among the masses of the globe, dividing them into opposing camps, or really a myriad of conflicting parties. Segments of the proletariat in the dominant countries were even led to believe that their interests were tied exclusively to their national identity and imperialist destiny. The most significant instance of revolt and revolution against these modern power structures therefore were those that posed the struggle against exploitation together with the struggle against nationalism, colonialism and imperialism. In these events humanity appeared for a magical moment to be united by a common desire for liberation and we seemed to catch a glimpse of a future when the modern mechanisms of domination would once and for all be destroyed. The revolting masses, their desire for liberation, their experiments to construct alternatives and their instances of constituent power have all at their best moments pointed toward the internationalisation and globalisation of relationships, beyond the divisions of national, colonial and imperialist rule. In our time this desire that was set in motion by the multitude has been addressed (in a strange and perverted but nonetheless real way) by the construction of Empire. One might even say that the construction of Empire and its global networks is a *response* to the various struggles against the modern machines of power and specifically to class struggle driven by the multitude's desire for liberation. The multitude called Empire into being.

Saying that Empire is good *in itself*, however, does not mean that it is good *for itself*. Although Empire may have played a role in putting and end to colonialism and imperialism, it nonetheless constructs its own relationships of power based on exploitation that are in many respects more brutal than those it destroyed. The end of the dialectic of modernity has not resulted in the end of the dialectic of exploitation. Today nearly all of humanity is to some degree absorbed within or subordinated to the networks of capitalist exploitation. We see now an ever more extreme condition of radical separation of a small minority that controls enormous wealth from multitudes that live in poverty at the limit of powerlessness. The geo-

graphical and racial lines of oppression and exploitation that were established during the era of colonialism and imperialism have in many respects not declined but instead increased exponentially.

Despite recognising all this, we insist on asserting that the construction of Empire is a step forward on order to do away with any nostalgia for the power structures that preceded it and refuse any political strategy that involves returning to that old arrangement, such as trying to resurrect the nation state to protect us against global capital. We claim that Empire is better in the same way that Marx insists that capitalism is better than the forms of society and modes of production that came before it. Marx's view is grounded on a healthy and lucid disgust for the parochial and rigid hierarchies that preceded capitalist society as well as on a recognition that the potential for liberation is increased in the new situation. In the same way today we can see that Empire does away with the cruel regimes of modern power and also increases the potential for liberation.

We are well aware that in affirming this thesis we are swimming against the current of our friends and comrades on the Left. In the long decades of the crisis of the communist, socialist and liberal Left that has followed the 1960s, a large portion of critical thought, both in the dominant countries of capitalist development and in the subordinated ones, has sought to recompense sites of resistance that are founded on the identities of social subjects or national and regional groups, often grounding political analysis on the *localisation of struggles*. Such arguments are sometimes constructed in terms of "place-based" movements or politics, in which the boundaries of place (conceived either as identity or territory) are posed against the undifferentiated and homogeneous space of global networks. Other times such political arguments draw on the long tradition of Leftist nationalism in which (in the best cases) the nation is conceived as the primary mechanism of defence against the domination of foreign and/or global capital. Today the operative syllogism at the heart of the carious forms of "local" Leftist strategy seems to be entirely reactive: If capitalist domination is becoming ever more global, then our resistances to it must defend the local and construct barriers to capital's accelerating flows. From this perspective, the real globalisation of capital and the constitution of Empire must be considered signs of dispossession and defeat.

We maintain, however, that today this localist position, although we admire and respect the spirit of some of its proponents, is both false and damaging. It is false first of all because the problem is poorly posed. In many characterisations the problem rests on a false dichotomy between the global and the local,

assuming that the global entails homogenisation and undifferentiated identity whereas the local preserves heterogeneity and difference. Often implicit in such arguments is the assumption that the differences of the local are in some sense natural or at least that their origin remains beyond question. Local differences pre-exist the present scene and must be defended or protected against the intrusion of globalisation. It should come as no surprise given such assumptions that many defences of the local adopt the terminology of traditional ecology or even identify this "local" political project with the defence of nature and bio-diversity. This view can easily devolve into a kind of primordialism that fixes and romanticises social relations and identities. What needs to be addressed, instead, is precisely the *production of locality*, that is, the social machines that create and recreate the identities and differences that are understood as the local. The differences of locality are no pre-existing nor natural but rather effects of a regime of production. Globality similarly should not be understood in terms of cultural, political, or economic *homogeneisation*. Globalisation, like localisation, should be understood instead as a *regie* of the production of identity and difference, or really of homogenisation and heterogenisation. The better framework, then, to designate the distinction between the global and the local might refer to different networks of flows and obstacles in which the local moment or perspective gives priority to the reterritorialising barriers and the global moment privileges the mobility of deterritorialising flows. It is false, in any case, to claim that we can (re)establish local identities that are in some sense *outside* and protected against the global flows of capital and Empire.

The Leftist strategy of resistance to globalisation and defence of locality is also damaging because in many cases what appear as local identities are not autonomous nor self-determining but actually feed into and support the development of the capitalist imperial machine. The globalisation or deterritorialisation operated by the imperial machine is not in fact opposed to the localisation or reterritorialisation, but rather sets in play mobile and modulating circuits of differentiation and identification. The strategy of local resistance misidentifies and thus masks the enemy. We are by no means opposed to the globalisation of relationships as such — in fact, as we said, the strongest forces of Leftist internationalism have effectively led this process. The enemy, rather, is a specific regime of global relations that we call Empire. More important, this strategy of defending the local is damaging because it obscures and even negates the real alternatives and the potentials for liberation that exist *within* Empire. We should all be done once and for all with the search for an outside, a standpoint that imagines a purity for our politics. It is bet-

ter both theoretically and practically to enter the terrain of Empire and confront its homogenising and heterogenising flows in all their complexity, grounding our analysis in the power of the global multitude.

REFRAINS OF THE INTERNATIONALE

There was a time, not so long ago, when internationalism was a key component of proletarian struggles and progressive politics in general. "The proletariat has no country", or better, "the country of the proletariat is the entire world". The *Internationale* was the hymn of revolutionaries, the song of utopian futures. We should note that the utopia expressed in these slogans is in fact not really internationalist, if by internationalist we understand a kind of consensus among the various national identities that preserves their differences but negotiates some limited agreement. Rather, proletarian internationalism was anti-nationalist, and hence supranational and global. Workers of the world unite! — not on the basis of national identities but directly through common needs and desires, without regard to borders and boundaries.

Internationalism was the will of an active mass subject that recognised that the nation states were the key agents of capitalist exploitation and that the multitude was continually drafted to fight their senseless wars — in short, that the nation state was a political form whose contradictions could not be subsumed and sublimated but only destroyed. International solidarity was really a project for the destruction of the nation state and the construction of a new global community. This proletarian program stood behind the often ambiguous tactical definitions that socialist and communist parties produced during the century of their hegemony over the proletariat. If the nation state was a central link in the chain of domination and thus had to be destroyed, then the *national* proletariat had as a primary task destroying itself insofar as it was defined by the nation and thus bringing international solidarity out of the prison in which it had been trapped. International solidarity had to be recognised not as an act of charity or altruism for the good of others, a noble sacrifice for another national working class, but rather as proper to and inseparable from each national proletariat's own desire and struggle for liberation. Proletarian internationalism constructed a paradoxical and powerful political machine that pushed continually beyond the boundaries and hierarchies of the nation states and posed utopian futures only on the global terrain.

Today we should all clearly recognise that the time of such proletarian internationalism is over. That does not negate the fact, however, that the concept of

internationalism really lived among the masses and deposited a kind of geological stratum of suffering and desire, a memory of victories and defeats, a residue of ideological tensions and needs. Furthermore the proletariat does in fact find itself today not just international but (at least tendentially) global. One might be tempted to say that proletarian internationalism actually "won" in the light of the facts that the powers of nation states have declined in the recent passage toward globalisation and Empire, but that would be a strange and ironic notion of victory. It is more accurate to say, following the William Morris quote that serves as one of the epigraphs for this book, that what they fought for came about despite their defeat, but then turned out to be not what they meant — and perhaps now we have to fight for what they meant under another name.

The practice of proletarian internationalism was expressed most clearly in the international cycles of struggles. In this framework the (national) general strike and insurrection against the (nation)state were only really conceivable as elements of communication among struggles and processes of liberation on the internationalist terrain. From Berlin to Moscow, from Paris to New Delhi, from Algiers to Hanoi, from Shanghai to Jakarta, from Havana to New York, struggles resonated with one another throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A cycle was constructed as news of a revolt was communicated and applied in each new context, just as in an earlier era merchant ships carried the news of slave revolt from island to island around the Caribbean, igniting a stubborn string of fires that could not be quenched. For a cycle to form the recipients of the news must be able to "translate" the events into their own language, recognise the struggles as their own and thus add a link to the chain. In some cases this "translation" is rather elaborate: How Chinese intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century, for example. could hear of the anti-colonial struggles in the Philippines and Cuba and translate them into the terms of their own revolutionary projects. In other cases it is much more direct: how the factory council movement in Turin, Italy, was immediately inspired by the news of the Bolshevik victory in Russia. Rather than thinking of the struggles as relating to each other like links in a chain, it might be better to conceive of them as communicating like a virus that modulates its form to find in each context an adequate host.

It would not be hard to map the periods of extreme intensity of these cycles. A first wave might be seen as beginning after 1848 with the political agitation of the First International, continuing in the 1880s and 1890s with the formation of socialist political and trade union organisations, and then rising to a peak after the Russian revolution of 1905 and the first international cycle of anti-imperialist

struggles. A second wave arose after the Soviet revolution of 1917, which was followed by an international progression of struggles that could only be contained by fascisms on one side and reabsorbed by the New Deal and antifascist fronts on the other. And finally there was the wave of struggles that began with the Chinese revolution and proceeded through the African and Latin American liberation struggles to the explosions of the 1960s throughout the world.

These international cycles of struggles were the real motor that determined the development of the institutions of capital and that drove it in a process of reform and restructuring. Proletarian, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist internationalism, the struggle for communism, which lived in all the most powerful insurrectional events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, anticipated and prefigured the processes of the globalisation of capital and the formation of Empire in this way the formation of Empire is a *response* to proletarian internationalism. There is nothing dialectical nor teleological about this anticipation and prefiguration of capitalist development by the mass struggles. On the contrary, the struggles themselves a are demonstrations of the creativity of desire, utopias of lived experience, the workings of historicity as potentiality — in short, the struggles are the naked reality of the *res gestae*. A teleology of sorts is constructed only after the fact, *post festum*.

The struggles that preceded and prefigured globalisation were expressions of the force of living labour, which sought to liberate itself from the rigid territorialising regimes imposed on it. As it contests the dead labour accumulated against it, living labour always seeks to break the fixed territorialising structures, the national organisations and the political figured that keep it prisoner. With the force of living labour, its restless activity and its deterritorialising desire, this process of rupture throws open all the windows of history. When one adopts the perspective of the activity of the multitude, its production of subjectivity and desire, one can recognise how globalisation, insofar as it operates a real deterritorialisation of the previous structures of exploitation and control, is really a condition of the liberation of the multitude. But how can this potential for liberation be realised today? Does that same uncontainable desire for freedom that broke and buried the nation state and that determined the transition toward Empire still live beneath the ashes of the present, the ashes of the fire that consumed the internationalist proletarian subject that was centred around the industrial working class? What has come to stand in the place of the subject? In what sense can we say that the ontological rooting of a new multitude has come to be a positive of alternative actor in the articulation of globalisation?

We need to recognise that the very subject of labour and revolt has changed profoundly. The composition of the proletariat has transformed and thus our understanding to it must too. In conceptual terms we understand *proletariat* as a broad category that includes all those whose labour is directly or indirectly exploited by and subjected to capitalist norms of production and reproduction. In a previous era, the category of the proletarian centred around and was at times effectively subsumed under *industrial working class*, whose paradigmatic figure was the male mass factory worker. That industrial working class was often accorded the leafing role over other figures of labour (such as peasant labour and reproductive labour) in both economic analyses and political movements. Today that working class has all but disappeared from view. It has not ceased to exist, but it has been displaced from its privileged position in the capitalist economy and its hegemonic position in the class composition of the proletariat. The proletariat is not what it used to be, but that does not mean it has vanished. It means, rather, that we are faced once again with the analytical task of understanding the new composition of the proletariat as a class.

The fact that under the category of proletariat we understand *all* those exploited by and subject to capitalist domination should not indicate that the proletariat is a homogeneous or undifferentiated unit — it is indeed cut through in various directions by differences and stratifications. Some labour is waged, some is not; some labour is limited to eight hours a day and forty hours a week, some expands to fill the entire time of life; some labour is accorded a minimal value, some is exalted to the pinnacle of the capitalist economy. We argue in our book that among the various figures of production active today the figure of immaterial labour-power (involved in communication, co-operation, and the production and reproduction of affects) occupies an increasingly central position in both the schema of capitalist production and the composition of the proletariat. Our point her is that all of these diverse forms of labour are in some way subject to capitalist discipline and capitalist relations of production. This fact of being within capital is what defines the proletariat as a class.

In the second place we need to look more concretely at the form of the struggles in which this new proletariat expresses its desires and needs. In the second half of the twentieth century, and in particular in the two decades that stretched from 1968 to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the restructuring and global expansion of capitalist production have been accompanied by a transformation of proletarian struggles. As we said, the figure of an international cycle of struggles based on the

communication and translation of the common desires of labour in revolt seems no longer to exist. The fact that the cycle as the specific form of the assemblage of struggles has vanished, however, does not simply open up to an abyss. On the contrary, we can recognise powerful events on the world scene that reveal the trace of the multitude's refusal of exploitation and that signal a new kind of proletarian solidarity and militancy.

Consider the most radical and powerful struggles of the final years of the twentieth century: the Tiananmen Square events in 1989, the Intifada against Israeli State authority, the May 1992 revolt in Los Angeles, the uprising in Chiapas that began in 1994, the series of strikes that paralysed France in December 1995 and those that crippled South Korea in 1996. Each of these struggles was specific and based on immediate regional concerns in such a way that they could in no way be linked together as a globally expanding chin of revolt. None of these events inspired a cycle of struggles because the desires and needs they expressed could not be translated into different contexts. In other words, (potential) revolutionaries in other parts of the world did not hear of the events in Beijing, Nablus, Los Angeles, Chiapas, Paris, or Seoul and immediately recognise them as their own struggles. Furthermore, these struggles not only fail to communicate to other contexts, but they lack even a local communication and thus often have a very brief duration where they are born, burning out in a flash. This is certainly one of the central and most urgent political paradoxes of our time: In our much celebrated age of communication, *struggels have become all but incommunicable*.

This paradox of incommunicability makes it extremely difficult to grasp and express the new power posed by the struggles that have emerged. We ought to be able to recognise that what the struggles have lost in extension, duration and communicability they have gained in intensity. We ought to be able to recognise that although all of these struggles focused on their own local and immediate circumstances, they all nonetheless posed problems of supranational relevance, problems that are proper to the new figure of imperial capitalist regulation. In Los Angeles, for example, the riots were fuelled by local racial antagonisms and patterns of social and economic exclusion that are in many respects particular to that (post)urban territory, but the events were also immediately catapulted to a general level insofar as they expressed a refusal of the post-Fordist regime of social control. Like the Intifada in certain respects, the Los Angeles riots demonstrated how the decline of Fordist bargaining regimes and mechanisms of social mediation has made the management of racially and socially diverse metropolitan territories and populations so precarious. The looting of commodities and burning of property were not just

metaphors but the real global condition of the mobility and volatility of post-Fordist social mediations. In Chiapas, too, the insurrection focused primarily on local concerns: problems of exclusion and lack of representation specific to Mexican society and the Mexican State, which have also to a limited degree long been common to the racial hierarchies throughout much of Latin America. The Zapatista rebellion, however, was also immediately a struggle against the social regime imposed by NAFTA and more generally the systematic exclusion and subordination in the regional construction of the world market. Finally, like those in Seoul, the massive strikes in Paris and throughout France in later 1995 were aimed at specific local and national labour issue (such as pensions, wages and unemployment), but the struggle was also immediately recognised as a clear contestation of the new social and economic construction of Europe. The French strikes called above all for a new notion of the public, a new construction of public space against the neo-liberal mechanisms of privatisation that accompany more or less everywhere the project of capitalist globalisation. Perhaps precisely because all there struggles are incommunicable and thus blocked from travelling horizontally in the form of a cycle, they are forced rather to leap vertically and touch immediately on the global level.

We ought to be able to recognise that this is not the appearance of a new cycle of internationalist struggles, but rather the emergence of a new quality of social movements. We ought to be able to recognise, in other words, the fundamentally new characteristics these struggles all present, despite their radical diversity. First, each struggle, although firmly rooted in local conditions, leaps immediately to the global level and attacks the imperial constitution in its generality. Second, all the struggles destroy the traditional distinction between economic and political struggles. The struggles are at once economic, political and cultural — and hence they are biopolitical struggles, struggles over the form of life. They are constituent struggles, creating one public spaces and new forms of community.

We ought to be able to recognise all this, but it is not all that easy. We must admit, in fact, that even when trying to individuate the real novelty of these situations we are hampered by the nagging impression that these struggles are always already old, outdated and anachronistic. The struggles at Tiananmen Square spoke a language of democracy that seemed long out of fashion; the guitars, headbands, tent and slogans all looked like a weak echo of Berkeley in the 1960s. The Los Angeles riots, too, seemed like an aftershock of the earthquake of racial conflicts that shook the United States in the 1960s. The strikes in Paris and Seoul seemed to take us back to the era of the mass factory worker, as if they were the last gasp of a dying working class. All these struggles, which pose really new elements, appear form

the beginning to be already old and outdated — precisely we because they cannot communicate, because their languages cannot be translated. The struggle do no communicate despite their being hyper-mediatised, on television, the Internet and every other imaginable forum. Once again we are confronted by the paradox of in-communicability.

We can certainly recognise real obstacles that block the communication of struggles. One such obstacle is the absence of a recognition of a common enemy against which the struggles are directed. Beijing, Los Angeles, Nablus, Chiapas, Paris, Seoul: The situations seem all utterly particular, but in fact they all directly attack the global order of Empire and seek a real alternative. Clarifying the nature of the common enemy is thus an essential political task. A second obstacle, which is really corollary to the first, is that there is no common language of struggles that could "translate" the particular language of each into a cosmopolitan language. struggles in other parts of the world and even our own struggles seem to be written in an incomprehensible foreign language. This too points toward an important political task: to construct a new common language that facilitates communication, like the languages of anti-imperialism and proletarian internationalism did for the struggles of a previous era. Perhaps this needs to be a new type of communication that functions not on the basis of resemblances but on the basis of differences: a communication of singularities.

Recognising a common enemy and inventing a common language of struggles are certainly important political tasks and we will advance them as far as we can in the course of the book, but our intuition tells us that this line of analysis fails to grasp the real potential presented by the new struggles. Our intuition tells us, in other words, that the model of the horizontal articulation of struggles in a cycle is no longer adequate to recognise the way in which contemporary struggles achieve global significance. Such a model in fact blinds us to their real new potential.

Marx tried to understand the continuity of the cycle of proletarian struggles that were emerging in nineteenth-century Europe in terms of a mole and its subterranean tunnels. Marx's mole would surface in times of open class conflict and then retreat underground again — not to hibernate passively, but to burrow its tunnels, moving along with the times, pushing forward with history so that when the time was right (1830, 1848, 1870) it would spring to the surface again. "Well grubbed old mole!"[2] Well, we suspect that Marx's old mole has finally died. It seems

2 Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, New York: International Publishers 1963, p. 121.

to us, in fact, that in the contemporary passage to Empire the structured tunnels of the mole have been replaced by the infinite undulations of the snake. This is the image that Deleuze gives in his analysis of the passage from disciplinary societies to societies of control. (Deleuze claims that contemporary society had gone beyond the disciplinary forms that Foucault analysed. Today the disciplinary institutions, the school the family, the prison, the factory, are all in crisis. This doesn't mean that disciplinary logics are breaking down; what is breaking down rather are the institutional boundaries that once defined and limited their application to one social space. The disciplinary logics spread out across society, they are generalised and in some respects intensified. The generalised disciplinarity is what defines the society of control.) "The old mole", Deleuze writes, "is the animal of closed environments, but the snake is the animal of the societies of control.[3] We have passed from one animal to another, from the more to the snake, in the regime we live under, but also in out way of living and our relations with others." The depths of the modern world and its subterranean passageways have in postmodernity all become superficial. Today's struggles slither silently across the superficial, imperial landscapes. Perhaps the incommunicability of struggles, the lack of well-structured, communicating tunnels, is in fact a strength rather than a weakness — a strength because all

of the movements are immediately subversive in themselves and so not wait on any sort of external aid or extension to guarantee their effectiveness. Perhaps the more capital extends its global network of production and control, the more powerful any singular point of revolt can be simply by focusing their own powers, concentrating their energies in a tense and compact coil, these serpentine struggles strike directly at the highest articulations of imperial order. Empire presents a superficial world, the virtual centre of which can be accessed immediately from any point across the surface. If these points were to constitute something like a new cycle of struggles it would be a cycle defined not by the communicative extension of the struggles but rather by their singular emergence, by the intensity that characterises them one by one. In short, this new phase is defined by the fact that these struggles do not link horizontally but each leap vertically, directly to the virtual centre of Empire.

From the point of view of the revolutionary tradition, one might object that the tactical successes of revolutionary actions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were all characterised precisely by the capacity to blast open the *weakest link*

3 See Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on Control Societes", in *Negotiations,* trans. Martin Joughin, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, pp. 177–182.

of the imperialist chain, that this is the ABC of revolutionary dialectics, and thus it would seem today that the situation is not very promising. It is certainly true that the serpentine struggles we are witnessing today do not provide any clear revolutionary tactics, or maybe they are completely incomprehensible from the point of view of tactics. Faced as we are with a series of intense subversive social movements that attack the highest levels of imperial organisation, however, it may be no longer useful to insist on the old distinction between strategy and tactics. In the constitution of Empire there is no longer an "outside" to power and thus no longer weak links — if by weak link we mean an external point where the articulations of global power are vulnerable. To achieve significance, every struggle must attack at the heart of the Empire, at its strength. That fact, however, does not give priority to any geographical regions, as if only social movements in Washington, Geneva or Tokyo could attack the heart of Empire. On the contrary, the construction of Empire and the globalisation of economic and cultural relationships means that the critical centre of Empire can be attacked from any point. The tactical preoccupations of the old revolutionary school are thus completely irretrievable; the only strategy available to the struggles is that of a constituent counter-power that emerges from within Empire.

Those who have difficulty accepting the novelty and revolutionary potential of this situation from the perspective of the struggles themselves might recognise it more easily from the perspective of imperial power, which is constrained to react to the struggles. Even when these struggles become sites effectively closed to communication, they are at the same time the maniacal focus of the critical attention of Empire. They are educational lessons in the classroom of administration and the chambers of government — lessons that demand repressive instruments. The primary lesson is that such events cannot be repeated if the processes of capitalist globalisation are to continue. These struggles, however, have their own weight, their own specific intensity, and moreover they are immanent to the procedures and developments of imperial power. They invest and sustain the processes of globalisation themselves. Imperial power whispers the names of the struggles in order to charm them into passivity, to construct a mystified image of them, but most important to discover which processes of globalisation are possible and which are not. In this contradictory and paradoxical way the imperial processes of globalisation assume these events, recognising them as both limits and opportunities to recalibrate Empire's own instruments. The processes of globalisation would not exist or would come to a halt if they were not continually both frustrated and driven by these explosions of the multitude that touch immediately on the highest levels of imperial power.

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METHODOLOGY AGAIN

Returning to the methodological or axiomatic point we spoke of at the beginning, one can see how this argument about international cycles of struggles and capitalist globalisation is based on the fundamental axiom: that resistance comes before power (in Deleuze/Foucault terms) or that proletarian struggles precede and prefigure the successive forms of capitalist society and rule (in Marxist/*operaismo* terms).

Now, it is perfectly reasonably to ask if it is in fact true that resistance comes before power and that social struggle precede and prefigure capitalist restructuration. We have not offered an argument for it, really — precisely, we have treated it as an axiom. Our book tries to demonstrate that it is plausible to read the history from below, but that is really not a proof. What is more interesting, though, is the *political effect* of this axiom, that it highlights the power of resistance and the power of social struggles.

Today, when facing the forces of capitalist globalisation and our new world order, it is all too easy and all too common to feel ourselves and our social movements powerless. This method can work as a kind of antidote to that cynicism and sense of powerlessness. It is not a matter of pretending that we are powerful when we are not, but rather recognising the power we really have, the power that created the contemporary world and can create another.