

Chaos: Our Own ‘Gun on The(ir) Table’

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Abstract In October 2011, George Papandreou, the then Greek Prime Minister, announced he was planning to hold a referendum in order for the Greek people to decide whether to agree to the bailout plan prepared by the International Monetary Fund, the Central European Bank and the European Commission. This intention was aborted due to intense pressure by Papandreou’s European partners, especially Germany and France. This interference clearly shows the problematic relationship between the so-called ‘markets’ and national-popular sovereignty. This article raises the question of *why* this interference happened in the first place, why the global markets felt such a big threat before the possibility of a vote taking place in a small country of 10 million inhabitants. And also, importantly, what this means in terms of potential for political agency by those who are usually considered to be lacking such agency, as having ‘no other alternative’ than to follow the one-way course of neoliberalism.

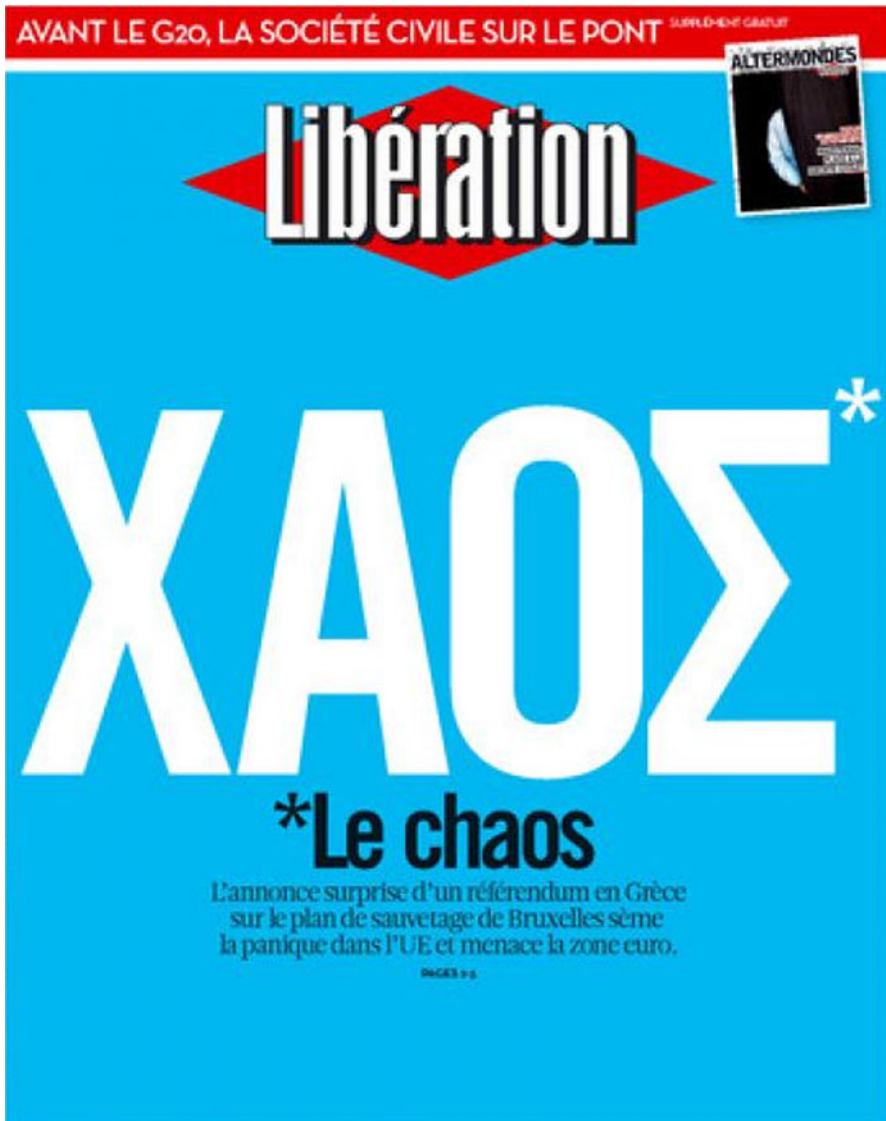
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This article was initially written towards the end of 2011. In view of the rapid changes in the situation, most of all two (for the time being) successive elections held in Greece on 6 May and 17 June, this is quite a long time. We believe, however, that these developments only confirm our analysis and provide fresh material and new illustrations for most of what we claim. There was not time enough for us to take these new facts into account but hopefully the reader can make the connections and apply the logic of the article to these new facts, *mutatis mutandis*.

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Introduction



For about 48 hours at the end of October 2011 a spectre was haunting not just Europe but the entire world: the spectre of a referendum in Greece. On 31 October, after the approval of yet another ‘final’ plan for the ‘salvation’ of Greece from its enormous debt problems by the Eurozone ministers in Brussels, the then prime minister, George Papandreou, announced he was planning to submit the agreement

to the approval of the Greek people themselves, through a referendum. From the moment a referendum was announced, even before the question to be posed was clarified, global panic and horror ensued. In previous EU summits Papandreou, in order to describe his negotiation tactics, had used the expression 'Now the gun is on the table'.¹ But this time it seemed that the gun had been discharged with all the subtlety of 'a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert':² his announcement was experienced almost as an indecency, as disrespect to the interlocutor. This idea was immediately condemned by all the major financial and political authorities and players. It was considered inadmissible opportunism which could jeopardise the course of the Euro, the EU and maybe even the global economy. The French daily newspaper *Libération* published on 1 November a front page of light blue behind the word 'chaos', written in Greek letters (see above). In Greece the vast majority on both the Right and Left, including within Papandreou's own party, was against the proposal. Within days Papandreou was forced to revoke his suggestion and resign from his post.³

This interference by the Troika in a public policy issue of Greece, a supposedly independent country, clearly shows the problematic relationship between the so-called 'markets' (as well as the domestic and international public institutions built in order to serve them) and national-popular sovereignty. The focus of this article is not to discuss questions of formal legitimacy, respect of international law, or conformity to the EU Treaties. Instead, it will try to raise the substantial question of *why* this interference happened in the first place, why the global markets felt such a big threat before the possibility of a vote taking place in a small country of 10 million inhabitants. And, importantly, what this means in terms of potential for political agency by those who are usually considered to have lost such agency, as having 'no other alternative' but to follow the single course of neoliberalism.

It is not unjustified to think that their fear can be our hope, and that in any case it is a sign that the so-called 'self-regulated market forces', and the political institutions built in order to serve them, are vulnerable as well; they are not omnipotent, they are not a small god on earth as some people like to depict them. Their power consists in their *managing uncertainty*. But there are certain forms, or intensities, of uncertainty that go beyond their managerial capacity, and that exceed what they are able to codify in terms of 'moral hazard' and translate into the language of 'predictability' and profitability.

Hence, it is interesting to see what kind of impact this kind of uncertainty could have on the tactics and strategy of the subaltern, or of the multitude, of the 'part of those who have no part', or whatever term we choose to use. In our article we

¹ E.g. *Ethnos* 2010. It is interesting to note that the Greek word used here, *trapézi*, is practically a variation of the older form *trápeza*, which today means *bank*—much in the same way as in most other European languages, which took this word from the medieval Italian *banca*—bench.

² 'Politics in the middle of imaginative interests are like a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert. The noise is deafening without being emphatic. It is not in harmony with the sound of any of the instruments. This mention of politics is going to give deadly offence to half my readers, and to bore the other half, who have already found far more interesting and emphatic politics in their morning paper' (Stendhal 2003).

³ Readers can find more details about these events in Walker (2012), and of course in any other number of press articles of their preference, from the many that were written about this episode.

consider this event, and the affect it generated with the political and financial elites of Europe and the whole world, as an important *blockage*, albeit temporary, of the capitalist machine of domination, and hence as a sign of the capacity of the multitude to disrupt or interrupt the supposedly ‘self-regulated’ circuit of ‘finance’ by introducing (democratic) politics into it—or, rather, by bringing to the fore the politics that always, even if implicitly, is working from within.

Debt as a (Political) Power Relationship

The way in which Papandreou—and by extension the whole country—was treated by the leaders of the EU and the G20, was a humiliation that was deeply felt throughout Greece. The spectacle of a powerless national leader having orders dictated to him by his supposed peers was a blow to national pride. However, if one survives the shock, one is led to think that power is not an object possessed by anybody, but a (mutual) relationship, a two-way road; if we interpret the yelling by Merkel and Sarkozy towards Papandreou purely as a sign of ‘dependency’ or ‘subalternity’ of the latter to the former, we forget to take into account that s/he who yells is the one who has something to lose; hence, to this extent she is dependent as well, on the one at whom she yells.

This is not only a question of good manners but could be formulated in terms of *owing* and *gratitude*, that is to say *in terms of power*. As Spinoza suggests:

He has another under his authority, who holds him bound, or has taken from him arms and means of defence or escape, or inspired him with fear, or so attached him to himself by past favour, that the man obliged would rather please his benefactor than himself, and live after his mind than after his own. He that has another under authority in the first or second of these ways, holds but his body, not his mind. But in the third or fourth way he has made dependent on himself as well the mind as the body of the other; yet only as long as the fear or hope lasts, for upon the removal of the feeling the other is left independent (Spinoza 1883 [1672], chap. 2 § 10).

From this point of view, it is important to note that the bailout agreement was presented—first by the European leaders to Papandreou, then by him and his partisans to the Greek people—as a very generous, and ultimate, concession or really a gift, by the strong ‘Europeans’ to ‘our country’. It was presented precisely as a *favour*, in Spinoza’s terminology, which the donors were ready to withdraw if it was not quickly and graciously accepted, with an accompanying ‘thank you’. However, anyone who makes a ‘gift’ and suspects that the recipient is not very enthusiastic to accept it, does not usually react this way; if we see them taking every possible effort in order to convince the ‘beneficiaries’ to accept the favour, then this reaction suggests that it was at least equally important for them to give this ‘gift’ and have it received. In other words, it leads us to suspect that it was equally—if not mainly—a gift to themselves.

If this is so, we should complement this approach to the authority/fear/gratitude complex with an insight by Michel Foucault: ‘terror is always reversible, and it

inevitably goes back to those who exert it. Fear is circular' (Foucault 1994, p. 69; our translation). In terms of a more or less 'classical' approach to strategy, it is commonplace that a strategist must know his enemy. As Sun Tzu put it in his own poetic style,

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle (Sun Tzu 2012).

In this sense, we can claim that, from this episode of the referendum being announced and immediately withdrawn, we obtained useful knowledge about the enemy, the personifications of neoliberal governmentality, as they were obliged to show (some of) their cards: now we know what scares them, what they want to avoid at all costs.

But we argue that this does not exhaust the issue; this is not the only aspect, nor the most important. Traditional strategic approaches are inadequate for conceiving of a *non-strategic strategy*, which is needed here for the movement of the multitude⁴ or, better, which is already at work in it. We will try to outline this idea in what follows.

Towards a Non-strategic Strategy

In Greece, some people—mainly those to the Left of Papandreou and Pasok—argued that a referendum presented a less democratic solution than might appear to be the case. A referendum transforms a complex set of demands, concerns and possible responses into a strict binary dilemma. The question put to the people is crucial—those who determine this question have a large scope to manipulate the genuine expression of the popular will (see for example Douzinas 2011). This criticism is not without merit. But what we are arguing here is that the *proposal* for a referendum, although—or perhaps, precisely, *because*—it was not implemented, *restored democracy*, even for a moment (but a moment that casted new light on all the other moments).

We understand democracy, with Rancière, not as a procedure for the expression of a pre-existing will, but as *the emergence of the part of those who have no part*.

This is what of all things democracy means. Democracy is not a type of constitution, nor a form of society. The power of the people is not that of a people gathered together, of the majority, or of the working class. It is simply the power peculiar to those who have no more entitlements to govern than to submit (Rancière 2006, pp. 46–47).

⁴ In what follows, although we use the notion of multitude, we decided to omit any reference to the already established work of Hardt and Negri. We did so because these two authors are neither the first, nor the only ones who have used this notion, although they are the most famous and although we appreciate them as well; others have done so in the past and also in the late twentieth–early twenty-first century, including Baruch Spinoza and Paolo Virno, whom we both quote as we find their approach more relevant and useful for our purpose here.

According to both political custom and the European Union law itself, European affairs are supposed to be governed by people who have ‘more entitlements’ than others in terms mainly of technical knowledge; and, secondarily, of a delegation by the majority, which in certain cases is so remote that it becomes practically invisible. The sudden emergence of a potential ‘co-decision procedure’ within this framework, the possibility for these techno-bureaucrats to share their authority with those with no such entitlements, provoked a scandal and a shock for them. It really was a *traumatic experience* for the European elites, in the psychoanalytic sense of the term as an ‘encounter with the Real which is impossible to symbolize’ (Evans 1996, entry ‘Real’ (and sub-entry ‘Anxiety and trauma’)). This traumatic quality is reported in all relevant press articles; for example:

Papandreou’s referendum call has been met with barely disguised anger in Europe and officials are scrambling to understand his motivations. Sweden’s foreign minister, Carl Bildt, sounded bewildered. ‘It’s difficult to see what the referendum is going to be about. ‘Do we want to be saved or not?’ Is that the question?’ (Schwartz 2011)

This bewilderment, this difficulty to ‘see what this is all about’, clearly shows the blockage of the logic of ‘favour’—which, incidentally, is another word for ‘Grace’. It is very telling that, here, as a synonym for the bailout package, the verb ‘to save’ is used; a term with very clear theological overtones. All the more so since this *salvation* is presented as conditional upon certain acts of the subject to be saved. These acts are subsumed under the term ‘*reforms*’, which the graced Greece has to carry out in order to be eligible for its salvation, and/or as a sign of repentance and acceptance of the neoliberal credo of credit.

All this is hardly surprising, as Giorgio Agamben—and Max Weber before him—has demonstrated the close links between economy and theology. The very word ‘economy’, before capitalism, was widely used to describe precisely the divine plan for the salvation of man (See Agamben 2011, esp. p. 109 seq; and Weber 1930).

By reading some more of Rancière’s passages, one gets the impression that they were written in order to describe precisely this collapse of meaning, this gap in the non-democratic symbolic order, which has no place for such unnecessary disturbances as political competence by those with no titles:

Therein lies the scandal: the scandal for well-to-do people unable to accept that their birth, their age, *or their science* has to bow before the law of chance; scandal too for those men of God who would have us all be democrats on the condition that we avow having had to kill a father or a shepherd for it, and hence that we are infinitely guilty, are in *inexpiable debt* to this father. And yet the ‘seventh title’ shows us that breaking with the power of kinship does not require any sacrifice or sacrilege. *All it requires is a throw of the dice*. The scandal is simply the following: among the titles for governing there is one that breaks the chain, a title that refutes itself: the seventh title is the absence of title. Such is the most profound trouble signified by the word democracy (Rancière 2006, pp. 40–41; our italics).

The threat of a referendum functioned, albeit momentarily, as precisely this 'throw of the dice' that is 'all that democracy requires', and it is in this sense that we claimed before that it 'restored democracy'.

Bartleby: a Story of Sophocleous Street⁵

Our suggestion for a 'non-strategic strategy' is analogous to Rancière's notion of a 'non-entitled entitlement'. Such a non-strategic strategy should be based on the observation that the 'nervousness' of the markets, and the panic of political leaders in Europe and beyond, was triggered *not by a specific answer, but by the possibility of the question itself*. If, for example, Papandreou had gone to the meeting and said, 'I reject the plan', or 'I am in favour of a different economic policy in Europe', it is our contention that this would have created much less insecurity and anxiety.

In one of the numerous articles written about this episode, Costas Lapavitsas, while criticising the Greek Prime Minister's move in the first place, goes on to add that 'the import of Papandreou's move, however, is that it has put *the real dilemma* of this crisis in front of the Greek people' (Lapavitsas 2011). Papandreou exposed the central tension at the heart of the crisis, not in the sense that he posed a 'real' dilemma, opposed to a 'false' or 'fraudulent' one, rather his intervention transformed what until then was considered a merely technical issue, a 'one-way road' which is not subject to political antagonism but only to economic determinism, into a subject of contestation. Whatever his 'deeper' motivations, which we cannot know, the fact of the matter is that he opened the way for *something to be decided upon*, rather than for something for which there is no alternative.

Lapavitsas is also right to highlight the role of mass mobilisations of the previous months as a cause for Papandreou's move. However, we would suggest the inverse to his causal logic:

Rapid unravelling of domestic political power began in the summer, with mass gatherings across Greece's major urban centres. The largest were in Syntagma Square in Athens, where the *Aganaktismenoi* (the 'Outraged') dismissed the political system and demanded 'real democracy'. An enormous demonstration took place in June, the government was shaken and Papandreou even resigned for a few hours, seeking a coalition government with the opposition. But a lack of political focus by the *Aganaktismenoi* allowed the government to escape (Lapavitsas 2011).

As we see it, the lack of 'focus' by the *Aganaktismenoi* (that is, of a clear and rational political programme to be implemented once they take power) did not 'allow', but *induced* the government to escape. The situation where tens, occasionally hundreds of thousands of people gather in squares, camp, hold assemblies, without posing a set of concrete demands to the state, is really unbearable to it (Cf. also Agamben 2003, pp. 84–85). It is also contaminating, like a virus: after these mobilisations, not only

⁵ The street where the Athens Stock Exchange lies.

were those governed not eager to be governed any more, but also not many politicians were very keen to govern them!

The motto 'I would prefer not to' which Herman Melville attributed to the eponymous hero of his novel (Melville 2006 [1853], *passim*), became the unspoken mantra of both the governing and the opposition parties, who were trying to get rid of (the monopoly of) power and persuade each other, but also the small far-right party 'LAOS' (Popular Orthodox Rally) to join the government in order to share the blame. One has only to read any report about the involuntary comedy that was staged on the central political scene in Athens on 9 November to see the relevance of the Bartleby comparison. We thought the most suitable one would be a report by the *New York Times*, and we will quote a rather large excerpt from it in order to make clear the absurdity of the situation:

Prime Minister George A. Papandreou went on national television on Wednesday evening to announce that a new interim government had been formed. But he did not name his successor, and in the hours that followed, it became clear that political disarray had set in once more. Mr. Papandreou's resignation was not announced, nor was the interim government named. By early evening, the president's office said that there would be no announcement before Thursday. Television provided glimpses of some of the drama. A furious Giorgos Karatzaferis, the leader of the small far-right party Laos, stormed out the presidential office building shortly after Mr. Papandreou's speech. He told waiting reporters that he had been summoned to a meeting with Mr. Papandreou; the president; and the leader of the opposition party New Democracy, Antonis Samaras, but found himself sitting in a hall alone. Apparently, the other men were too busy arguing to meet with him. Mr. Karatzaferis, one of the few politicians willing to risk the potential damage from supporting a new power-sharing government that must take on a host of unpopular tasks, said political games were being played. 'This is unacceptable,' he huffed before leaving. (Daley and Kitsantonis 2011)

The (Non)-Management of Uncertainty

As Agamben has shown, neoliberalism, and even the old (economic) liberalism which was labelled and codified (whether accurately or not) under the French motto *laissez faire-laissez passer*, is about the mastering not of things, of commodities, but of their *flows*; about processes, about channelling:

Turgot and Quesnay as well as Physiocratic officials were not primarily concerned with the prevention of hunger or the regulation of production, but wanted to allow for their development to then regulate and 'secure' their consequences. (Agamben 2001)

How is this regulation and securing carried out? One useful formulation in this respect can be found in Milios & Sotiropoulos (2009). Here, the authors are talking about financial derivatives, securitisation and market competition, but their

conclusions can be extended to neoliberal management at large—all the more so since they explicitly incorporate 'political events' into the calculation performed by capital markets:

Capital markets 'endeavour' (not always reliably) to *convert into quantitative signs 'political' events* within the enterprise. Forecasts and predictions embodied in securities do not need to be right. What really matters is this quantification process of political events *per se*. This process should be seen as a strategy: operating within a market 'panopticon', individual capitals are disciplined and forced in permanent reorganization (thus facilitating the imposition on them of the 'laws' of capital). (p. 181; our emphasis)

What goes 'within the enterprise', is also true *outside it*, especially if this outside is itself increasingly modelled on the enterprise paradigm, if every individual or collectivity is encouraged to conceive of herself as a 'human resource'—and act accordingly. For this reason, what is unbearable to the logic of neoliberal governmentality is a *non-commensurable contingency*, a political event within the generalised social (international) factory which is difficult to 'convert into quantitative signs'.

One of the basic characteristics of the neoliberal model is the increase in non-bank funding of credit, both by states and by enterprises. Above and beyond the other consequences, this places at the centre of the financial markets *risk management*, that is to say the factoring in of the contingency of non-achievement of the expected yield (particularly in an international market where a number of diverging forces are affecting profitability). Because the very character of production of surplus value as well as the overall claims being placed on the latter is *contingent*, risk management is organically linked to capital movement as such. (*Ibid.*, p. 179. Emphasis in the original)

In other words, neoliberal governance allows for the development of, and then regulates, disorder; but not just *any* disorder. There is a kind of disorder, a contingency, which escapes this regulation; and this is, precisely, *escape itself*. With Milios and Sotiropoulos, we could also call this contingency 'class struggle', but without the following qualification: that class struggle, before anything else, is the struggle *not to be (in) a class any more*; it is the effort of those who are codified and confined in the camp of labour, or the 'working class', not to confront another camp in a military battle, but simply to *exit* this (labour) camp. This is an exodus which makes it impossible for capital to 'know' them and so to defeat them in a battle, because it renders impossible and pointless any battle in the classical sense of the term. Or, in other words, because the very construction of a specific camp labelled as 'labour' already marks the (non-definitive) victory of capital; it is not the prerequisite for the struggle, but already a specific outcome of it—in the sense that 'to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting' (Sun Tzu, *op.cit.*, III.2).

Politics as Interruption

To use once more the words of Rancière, in order to conceive the non-strategic strategy, what we are in need of is an *interruption* of the formation and delimitation of camps—or of what he terms as *policing*:

Politics is what interrupts the play of sociological identities. In the nineteenth century, the revolutionary workers of which I studied the texts used to say: ‘*We are not a class*’. The bourgeoisie were identifying them as a dangerous class. But for them, the class struggle was the struggle for *not being a class*, the struggle to leave class and the place assigned to them by the existing order.⁶

In these circumstances, the question we have before ourselves looks like an oxymoron: how can we prepare for the unexpected, the unthinkable? The strategy of strategists—and of those who are or want to be assimilated into them, even if they do not have an army—consists in the bipolar fantasy of organised battle: ‘class against class’. Our tactics, the tactics of ‘bodies without organs’, can only be an activity directed towards other activities, not towards other organised groups or objects. The task of a non-strategic strategy can be formulated in terms of an *action upon other actions*.⁷ Maybe this is not even *upon*, but also *together with* other actions, or *next* to them; actions that we do not yet know or not even anticipate when we plan ours, and with which we may form assemblages of a rhizomatic type.⁸

So our action should take into account that it is not alone, nor alone with the opponent as it is in a duel. Instead, it coexists with other actions, and therefore always has something of the performativity and the virtuosity of a *musician*. Then again, not of a musician in a symphony orchestra, who performs a predefined and agreed-upon score (in Greek, *symphônia* means also ‘agreement’). The best analogy is probably a musician in a jazz orchestra who interacts with other musicians, the

⁶ Rancière (2008); our translation and emphasis. About his notion of ‘police’ as opposed to politics, cf.: ‘There are people who govern because they are the eldest, the highest-born, the richest, or the most learned. There are models of government and practices of authority based on this or that distribution of places and capabilities. Such is the logic that I’ve proposed be thought under the name of “police”’ (Rancière 2006, p. 47).

⁷ Cf.: ‘What defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action that does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present actions’ (Foucault 2000 [1981], p. 340).

⁸ About the notion of rhizome, cf. the following, rather long and difficult, but very important excerpt from Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*: ‘The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, becoming a piece in the orchid’s reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen. Wasp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements, form a rhizome. It could be said that the orchid imitates the wasp, reproducing its image in a signifying fashion (mimesis, mimicry, lure, etc.). But this is true only on the level of the strata—a parallelism between two strata such that a plant organization on one imitates an animal organization on the other. At the same time, something else entirely is going on: not imitation at all but a capture of code, surplus value of code, an increase in valence, a veritable becoming, a becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp. Each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 10).

existence and activity of whom he must include in the account and for whom he must foresee some space. The same of course applies to all the others: each of them should regulate their activity in relation to what others are doing—which she is not fully aware of before beginning to act.

In his article 'Virtuosismo e rivoluzione', Paolo Virno, in order to describe precisely this quality that characterises the action of the multitude, uses the Italian term *agire di concerto*.

The Multitude obstructs and dismantles the mechanisms of political representation. It expresses itself as an ensemble of 'acting minorities', none of which, however, aspires to transform itself into a majority. It develops a power that refuses to become government. Now, it is the case that each of the 'many' turns out to be inseparable from the 'presence of others', inconceivable outside of the linguistic cooperation or the 'acting-in-concert' that this presence implies. Cooperation, however, unlike the individual labor time or the individual right of citizenry, is not a 'substance' that is extrapolatable and commutable. It can, of course, be subjected, but it cannot be represented or, for that matter, delegated. The Multitude, which has an exclusive mode of being in its 'acting-in-concert', is infiltrated by all kinds of Kapos and Quislings, but it does not accredit stand-ins or nominees (Virno 2003).

So such a 'concert' would perhaps be able to accommodate and integrate within it the impolite 'shot' constituted by the invasion of politics in the field of regulated movement; or, better yet, to *produce* this shot itself, to become this very detonation which shifts and deterritorialises the police fences assigning a certain 'part' to everybody.

This means anything but 'relativism' or 'arbitrariness', as the followers of Enlightenment-phallogocentrism would be inclined to argue. For such a practice, the jazz saxophonist Ornette Coleman, in his July 1997 discussion with Jacques Derrida in Paris, used the following description:

when I was doing free jazz, most people thought that I just picked up my saxophone and played whatever was going through my head, without following any rule, but that wasn't true (Derrida and Coleman 1997).

It should be noted that Coleman explicitly links his activity with *democracy* (and also with *translation*); furthermore, when his interlocutor interrogates what exactly he means when he talks about the 'democratic values' of this music which is improvised but at the same time codified, he replies:

People on the outside think that it's a form of extraordinary freedom, but I think that it's a limitation. (...) What's really shocking in improvised music is that despite its name, most musicians use a 'framework [*trame*]' as a basis for improvising. (...) the music I wrote (...) has two characteristics: it's totally improvised, but at the same time it follows the laws and rules of European structure. And yet, when you hear it, it has a completely improvised feel [*air*]. (Derrida and Coleman 1997)

This example of an activity that decides every time, in a relational way and jointly with others, about something *undecidable*, without following abstract rules inherited from the past or producing new ones for the future, that is not susceptible of a Kantian-style universalisation, standardisation and pedagogy, sounds like a paradox; it confuses and embarrasses those who think in terms of traditional party and state politics. However, the experience of social struggles of the last period, and maybe more than the last period, in Northern Africa and beyond, shows that such activities do take place and, what is more, they have produced far more fruitful, promising and interesting things than any other activity in the field of politics.

These were activities that were aware (albeit, perhaps, unconsciously—yet another oxymoron) that the result will never be what one had calculated; what emerges will always be a non-voluntary outcome. And yet this awareness not only did not paralyse the actors but, rather, was one more reason for them to follow their desire, to have confidence in it, not acting as calculating *homines* (and *foeminae*) *oeconomici* (-ae). So maybe the non-didactic lesson from the experience of the social struggles of the last period and maybe more than the last period, can be summarised in the adage: *non sapere aude!* Let us dare *not to know*, or at least to assume the fact that there will always be something that we do not know and do not master—since the political is always a ‘non-all’. And yet let us dare to act, beyond the model of a conscious, deliberate, organised, total(ised) struggle, engaged in *imperceptible politics*.⁹ The result each time is unintended—but it is possible and imperative to desire the unintended.

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⁹ Concerning the notion of ‘imperceptible politics’, see Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2008, p. 71 sqq.

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