

Determinations of Dissent: Protest and the Politics of Classification

by

Marta Bashovski

Master of Arts, University of Victoria, 2010

Bachelor of Arts, University of British Columbia, 2006

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines the significance of the politics of classification to how we have come to understand and study practices of protest and dissent. I trace the politics of classification in the history of political thought, and highlight how the categories of thought often most deeply associated with the promises of the Euro-modern Enlightenment constitute both aspirations and limits to questions of dissent and political transformation. These modern aspirations and limits, I argue, have tended to fall into one of two traditions – a Kantian/Foucauldian tradition and a Hegelian/Marxian tradition. While the Hegelian/Marxian tradition involves a specific, progressivist theory of the subject, lines of thought associated with this tradition tend to be reductionist. By contrast, the Kantian/Foucauldian tradition is not reductionist in the same way as the Hegelian/Marxian, and involves both an ontological and an epistemological theory of classification, but is constrained by its own constitutive limits.

I apply these theoretical insights to a study of how a range of sympathetic, progressivist commentators – from journalists, to activists, to academics – have attempted to explain the 2009-2013 wave of global protests. Examining commentaries that discuss and link events ranging from the Syntagma Square and *indignadas* protests in Greece and Spain, the Occupy Wall Street movement and the summer 2013 protests in Brazil, Turkey and Bulgaria, I show that these commentaries claim novel politics but ignore the politics of classification within which their own work operates. This lack of attention paid to the politics of classification by both participants and commentators in progressive politics is

symptomatic of a hegemony of the particular classificatory practices and categories I have identified. I suggest that explanations of protests often clustered around three key issues – or three ways that commentators claimed something was changing – claims to novelty, claims to the emergence of new forms of subjectivity, and claims around changing structures of authority. To take seriously the question of dissent, I conclude that we must take into account the epistemological inheritances within which our claims about practices of dissent are located.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents	v
Acknowledgments.....	vii
Prologue, the politics of sideways glances	xi
Introduction.....	1
The politics of classification and the context of dissent	1
The epistemology of dissent	14
The constitutive presence and absence of the colonial	15
Plan of the dissertation.....	23
Chapter 1: Historical cartographies of classification: The order and limits of modern knowledge and subjectivity.....	28
In the Enlightenment Room.....	28
The ordering of orders	35
European narratives of classification.....	41
Historical epistemology and archaeology	41
The Aristotelians and the Nominalists	46
Modernity and the Question of Man.....	58
Formalization as the modern project.....	72
Chapter 2: Crises of understanding and the classification of dissent: Gramsci, Lukács, Mannheim and the epistemology of dissent.....	74
Introduction.....	74
Inheritances: Enlightenment, Romanticism, Marx	80
Diagnoses: Crisis, reification, sociology of knowledge.....	89
Classifying the subject of dissent.....	104
Totalities: framing emancipation	122
Conclusion	129
Chapter 3: The persistence of novelty: understanding protests and the present	131
Introduction.....	131
Diagnoses of novelty in the 2009-2013 protests.....	134
Exemplarities and repetitions.....	144
Forms of novelty and the question of the present	149
Conclusion	157
Chapter 4: Classifying dissenters: Forms and limits of subjectivities in contemporary protests	158
Introduction.....	158
Long(er)standing claims to novel subjectivities	163
New claims to new subjectivities in the 2009-2013 protests.....	169
Enlightenment thought and the question of shifts in public consciousness.....	175
The contemporary status of the subject and the principle of subjectivity.....	181
The problem of emancipation	188
Chapter 5: Aporetic alternatives and the authority of classification.....	192
Introduction.....	192
Demands-making, authority-taking?.....	197
Autonomous authorities, authorizing detachments?	204

Authorizing strategies, authorizing concepts.....	211
Authority of classification.....	224
Conclusion	228
Bibliography	233

Acknowledgments

This project began on a sunny day in rural Wales with a beer and a question. The exact question slips my mind but it was about what event happening at the time made me angry and stimulated thought. My answer was based on my experiences in Victoria and in Sofia, Bulgaria, and has taken many forms before assuming its current shape in this dissertation. Along the way, the ideas in the pages to follow have been nurtured, challenged, pushed, and reframed by the many people I am lucky to consider mentors, colleagues and friends.

The person who asked the first questions to which this dissertation is a response, and many of the questions that have shaped my thinking, is Rob Walker. Rob's ability to zero in on precisely what matters and what's at stake in a given issue has given this project much of its form and its significance. I am immeasurably grateful for the many conversations we have had over the years, from the specific questions on parts of this work, to offhand comments that have substantially changed the direction of my thinking. I have been very fortunate to work with and learn from Rob from my early years in Victoria as a Master's student through the many turns my PhD has taken.

From an initial germination in a Welsh pub, this project crossed several oceans to take its first concrete form at the International Political Sociology (IPS) doctoral workshop in Honolulu, Hawai'i. There, I was very lucky to have Mike Shapiro, whose work shaped my Master's thesis, comment on the argument I hoped to eventually make into a dissertation. Mike agreed to be part of the dissertation committee, and has invited me to engage with a variety of texts and fields I would have never encountered otherwise. Mike's generosity as a reader, interlocutor and friend, in correspondence, over meals at

conferences, and in a wonderful semester spent at the University of Hawai'i, have contributed to both the written form of the thesis and to who I have become as a scholar.

Simon Glezos was a colleague and friend long before he joined my dissertation committee. His support of this work and of my development as a scholar at crucial moments both strengthened this project and my confidence in completing it. Reuben Rose-Redwood stepped in at the final hour and contributed very helpful and conscientious comments and questions for which I am immensely grateful. I also owe thanks to other UVic faculty members who contributed questions and comments on drafts and spurred my thinking in new directions: Warren Magnusson directed me to look deeper into the rich field of social movement studies and its many branches, Avigail Eisenberg's support as department chair and Master's supervisor provided both the germ of my initial interest in the politics of classification and the opportunity to teach in political theory which shaped the thinking in Chapter 1, and Jamie Lawson's thoughtful questions shaped my thinking on Marxist and Gramscian thought. Finally, Scott Watson's direction in international relations helped me to situate this work within the context of a field I came to relatively late. Also in the Department of Political Science, I would like to thank the department's administrative staff, past and present, and particularly Joy Austin, Joanne Denton and Rachel Richmond, for their patient guidance through the bureaucratic parts of academic life.

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Most of this work was written in Victoria, British Columbia, on the territories of the Lekwungen-speaking peoples, territories with which the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples have historical relationships that continue to this day. The last parts of this work came together on the territories of the Syilx (Okanagan) peoples. I am a grateful guest on these lands.

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Prologue, the politics of sideways glances¹

The first time I experienced what I would now describe as righteous political anger, an anger all the more fevered because of my powerlessness to unleash it on anyone or anything, was in the spring of 2003. I was in my second year of a Bachelor of Arts degree, as of then major undeclared, but leaning toward Political Science, because of its relative greater ‘life relevance’ or ‘practicality’ over English Literature and its seeming emphasis on talking about the feelings that you had when reading... Conrad, let’s say. What I really wanted to be was a real writer of novels, of course, but, in the words of a French teacher whose fear I continue to share, J’ai toujours voulu écrire, mais je jamais eu le courage de le faire. But that’s another story for another day. Political theory is where I found myself, because I didn’t think my personal feelings (or anyone else’s) were relevant to thinking about the problems of the world – which, in any case, were more important than novels.

I have one vivid image-memory from that time, a memory that is encapsulated by a moment the sensory fullness of which remains. I think it was sometime in early February of 2003, maybe in the afternoon, as it was still light out. It was raining, but not heavily. I had just left a lecture and was walking back to my dorm, quickly, so as not to get too wet. As I passed one of the many poster poles around campus, I caught a glimpse of a poster that said something like “No War in Iraq” and urged people to come to a demonstration in front of the Art Gallery. I don’t remember what the poster looked like, or even exactly what it said. It doesn’t matter, really, for the purposes of this story. What I remember was the rage I felt overwhelming me as I walked past. Those fuckers are

¹ The text of this prologue first appeared as an essay in the *Journal of Narrative Politics* 4(2), 141-44.

really going to do it. They are lying through their teeth, and no one can stop them from going to war, and killing because they want to. No one can stop them. The leering, self-satisfied faces of Cheney, Rumsfeld, Bush. I stopped paying attention to the debates, the justifications, the grinding gears after that, as much as I could in that war-saturated media time. I didn't go to the demonstration, what became part of the largest coordinated series of anti-war demonstrations in history. Wikipedia now tells me that 40 000 people came out in Vancouver. I walked away from televisions. I tried to avoid the headlines, and when anyone asked me what I thought, I said I didn't want to talk about it. It made me too angry. Back in high school, a friend of mine had taken to using the word 'visceral.' It was her favourite word, and she often used it in tandem with 'apathy,' a word whose meaning I was pretty sure I'd experienced. I'd never really understood what 'visceral' meant, though, except that it had something to do with your guts. Later that second semester of my second year of university, it occurred to me that I now knew how to use 'visceral' in a sentence. I felt sick to my stomach when I heard the phrase 'weapons of mass destruction.' And somehow, the memory that remains of that time of intensely focused emotion is that of the helpless rage brought forth by a rainy sideways glance at a poster outside of Buchanan A.

*

In the fall of 2011, I was entering the second year of my PhD program at the University of Victoria. My main interest at the time was understanding for myself the problem of origins (and more importantly stories of origins) through the late 1960s philosophy of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. "It seems like you learned a lot," my supervisor wrote on my tortured exegesis of Foucault's archaeologies. I was preparing for my first comprehensive exam, in the interdisciplinary field of "Cultural, Social and Political

Thought,” and I couldn’t find any text that I particularly liked other than those of Derrida, whose linguistic plays I found charming and couldn’t help emulating. It was politically important too, I was sure of it. The problem of ‘resistance’ I thought, puzzling over the reading section titled “Contours of Critique,” was that it’s a bit of a cop out to admit the legitimacy of those you are resisting by positioning your claims against their dominance. Charming linguistic plays seemed like a more appealing option. “Perhaps, it is certainly the oft-repeated hope, these sorts of contestations of appeals, appealing the appeal of appeals to origins, unsettle their claims to legitimacy, uncovering their non-originary histories,” I wrote, high on self-satisfaction, coffee, and 1.5 hours of sleep.

I was fairly preoccupied with all of that, but occasionally I found time to feel excited and hopeful when I looked at stories and videos from Zucotti Park and elsewhere. Part of my procrastinatory web-repertoire became scrolling through the 99% Tumblr, talking to my much more engaged roommates about their experiences. They had been going to organizing meetings for what became known as The People’s Assembly of Victoria. (As ‘Victoria’ is already the name of the already occupied unceded territories of the Coast and Straits Salish peoples, the name ‘Occupy Victoria’ seemed uncouth at best). They talked about Media Committees and Food Committees and the People’s Education Library. I donated two books – I think one was Plato and the other was definitely Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks. I remember saying, handing my roommate the Gramsci, that I couldn’t envision reading that again. I didn’t go to any of those meetings, and I only made it to Centennial Square (at that time, in a decolonizing gesture, newly renamed Spirit Square), the site of the People’s Assembly of Victoria (PAOV), twice before it began to dwindle amid city ordinances and was removed as winter fell. My roommates

and several of my friends and colleagues camped out the first night, and spent long hours in the square. I walked through one night, meandering between groups of people, feeling cold, out of place and uncomfortable, and a little scared. Of what, I don't know. Another time, in the late afternoon, equally cold, when The People's Assembly of Victoria had been established for a couple of weeks at least, I joined several friends (I think we had been studying at a nearby café) to check out that day's General Assembly. By that time, I knew how it all worked. The gestures, the people's mic, the consensus-based decisions. I went that day because a friend of a friend would be introducing a motion to adopt a resolution towards the decolonization of Victoria. If I remember correctly, it was the only resolution that was adopted by the PAOV during its activity. What particularly struck me that day, though, was the General Assembly's facilitation. Someone had taken on a facilitator role and was moving the conversation along, calling on speakers, opening and closing discussion. It felt like a smoothly running gathering, and again, I felt uncomfortable. I think it's been my resting emotional stance for a while now. Not to split hairs (or, rather, to do exactly that – my favourite literary device was always litotes – saying the negative to imply the positive), but for a leaderless movement, this one sure seemed to have a leader, at least that afternoon. Nonetheless, it was all very exciting and – dare I say it? – cool. Especially the parts where so many people didn't get it. I took pleasure in reading the befuddled (and often angry) commentaries trying to describe what 'Occupy' was about, and what it was for. It was intellectually interesting and politically relevant, I thought, both that this, whatever it was, was happening in so many places (albeit most of them cities in the West) and that it was hard to suss out just what was going on. There was something going and we can't name what it is! How... cool is that?

Who are you? What do you want? What are your demands? What is your program? Soon enough, people began to try to answer these questions and others like them, but that, too, is another story for another day.

*

In late June of 2013, I was heading to Bulgaria, the country of my birth, with a suitcase full of unread books. After my family visit and seaside vacation, I would be attending a weeklong methods workshop in ‘postinternational thought’ in rural Wales, an experience I hoped would somewhat shake out nearly two years of debilitating intellectual and personal insecurities. I billed it as a self-imposed test: enjoy this workshop or give up this academic thing, finally. But first, family time. My plane was late arriving in Sofia by about 45 minutes and my brother and mother, also in Bulgaria that summer, were coincidentally 45 minutes late to meet me at the airport. They were both a bit breathless when they saw me, excited in that somewhat formal way one gets when about to describe a traffic situation. Orlov Most was impassable, Todor said, blocked off by the protestors. They’d had to manoeuvre all over the city to get to the airport. And they’d marched the night before! Mama, too! She’d loved it, my shy, fearful mama who tends to walk out of the room when the news is on, saying something like, “It’s horrible. I can’t watch this.” Maybe we could go out again tomorrow night?

The protests had been going on for about a week by then, and the numbers were unprecedented. In that little country where cynicism tends to rule, tens of thousands were in the streets every night, expressing their frustration and anger, and a sense of being together in a way that hadn’t occurred in years. We went out to the center of Sofia late

the following afternoon, heading towards the statue of Tsar Osvoboditel² where many of the protest marches had begun. There were signs calling for the government's resignation, Bulgarian flags leaned along the walls of buildings, and the trade in protest flags was in full swing on street corners. A crowd was gathering alongside us as we walked, as if the usual groups of people out for their evening stroll along Vitosha, the trendy shopping and café street, were diverting their paths toward the government buildings. Groups of young people usually found drinking in the park, babas and dyados in their strolling best (preserved from the communist days), families with children in strollers and on parents' shoulders, the middle-aged office workers just off the job. And us, the immigrants returned 'home' for another summer vacation, having missed most of the last twenty years. As it grew dark, we started marching through the centre of the city, to the headquarters of each of the main parties, singing and chanting. Riot cops lined the entrances to most public buildings as well as at the party headquarters, but, for the most part, no one engaged them. Todor was nervous that a fight would break out at the Ataka³ headquarters and Mama wanted us to hang back as the group snaked towards their offices next to the opera house, but nothing happened that time. At around nine o'clock, the crowd had thinned and we wandered away to get some dinner. Others headed to discussion groups at Orlov Most and Tsar Osvoboditel –people camped there for months, too. Todor asked me if I wanted to go again the following night, but I didn't feel like it. It was definitely exciting that it, whatever 'it' was, was happening, though. The protests continued nightly throughout the summer and I watched the reports on TV.

² The statue is of Alexander II, the "Tsar Liberator," who assisted in the cause of Bulgarian independence from Ottoman rule during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78.

³ Ataka is Bulgaria's ultra-nationalist, racist right-wing party, led by former journalist and television presenter Volen Siderov.

I feel a sense of expertise and ownership over Bulgaria when I am elsewhere, a sense I know is feigned and mostly performative, because when I return there, my pseudo-foreignness is all too obvious. As I get older, I think it's getting better – is that because I've given up my teenage preoccupation with appearing as 'Canadian' as possible or because I've spent more and more of my time in Bulgaria, learning more, feeling somehow relaxed there in a way I've never felt in Canada? Yet, the disjuncture of my supposed expertise vis-a-vis Bulgaria when I am with Bulgarians and when I am elsewhere remains. I just did it above – I narrated that story as if I knew about cynicism, and anger and compatriotship, despite having spent two thirds of my life far away, disavowing all of that.

The sociologist Richard Sennett writes that “[p]art of the life of a social movement is the effort to say what it is, to see its contours in order to speak its nature.”⁴ Although I've tended to be taken up, intellectually, emotionally, and politically, with 'protests', 'social movements', various kinds of 'expressions of dissent' (none of the monikers quite work), I've been more excited by the incapacity to articulate their contours in any precise way – both my own, and one that seems more broadly present. I'm curious about our simultaneous desire and incapacity to "speak [their] nature." I've made this concern academic – perhaps an alternative sideways to that of angrily stalking past a poster, or excitedly marching in a demonstration I feel a vaguely patriotic connection to.

Ten years ago, at a part-time job in student services, a friend and I used to congratulate one another on not being 'joiners.' By this, I suppose, we meant that we didn't want to get taken up by activist group dynamics, by ideology – didn't it make more sense to

⁴ Richard Sennett, "Foreward," in *The Voice and The Eye* by Alain Touraine (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), x.

examine from the sidelines, to be sympathetic and engaged but detached from the minutiae?

I've cultivated a politics of the sideways glance – perhaps this is the most comfortable way to work through my once helpless rage? Or perhaps it is a visceral apathy? I tell myself that sideways glances are important.

In that spring of 2003, my academic writing became more confident, more assured in argument and evidence. My journaling practice became more sporadic. I never fully gave it up, but it too became the object of a sideways glance.

In 2018, I've written most of a dissertation on my own reluctant stances in relation to others' anger, courage, hope, desire. My own anger, courage, hope, and desire are in there somewhere too – perhaps in the years of research and analysis, perhaps in the glimpses of life stories that linger there. I have had a lot to say about why and how we try to express the excitement of a protest, the moment of resistance, of collective possibility, and it could probably be contained in the contented, yet ambivalent, thrill of a sideways glance.

Introduction

God is dead; but given the way people are, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. – And we – we still have to vanquish his shadow, too. – Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

The world of the human age is an aesthetic pretext for grinding terror or pathological ecstasy, and in its cosmos all of it drawn from the very fibers of our own being and at one with every post-natural cell more alien to us than nature itself, we continue murmuring Kant's old questions – What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope – under a starry heaven no more responsive than a mirror or spaceship, not understanding that they require the adjunct of an ugly and bureaucratic representational qualification: what can I know *in this system?* What should I do in this world *completely invented by me?* What can I hope for alone in an *altogether human age?* – Frederic Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*

As an in-house criticism of that mainstream, the theories of liberation may have to learn a lot. They will certainly have to be, as part of the ruling worldview, more modest. As an aspect of the modern world's concept of sane, mature, scientific dissent, with only the romantic traditions of 19th century Europe to give them a touch of unmanageability or untameability... these theories must recognize the existence of dissent that is not only 'insane' and 'infantile' but which flouts the first canon of all post-Enlightenment theories of knowledge, namely that a dissent to qualify as dissent must be fully translatable into the idiom of modernity – Ashis Nandy "Shamans, Savages and the Wilderness: On the Audibility of Dissent and the Future of Civilizations"

The politics of classification and the context of dissent

Our desires for change are constrained by our understandings of what change can possibly be. In seeking change, a different political order, as the subjects of this dissertation do, we moderns begin from a series of given categories – categories that capture past and present orders, categories through which we understand ourselves and categories that encompass our hopes for a different, and perhaps better, future. Yet, as I'll argue in the pages to follow, these categories are not innocent. They are not blank neutral descriptors of a situation, event, or point in time. They have histories borne of particular contexts, of particular needs and of particular political possibilities and imperatives. Though we have inherited their histories, the categories that order our lives also have presents and futures. These presents and futures, however ambivalent and malleable we may believe them to be, are themselves bound up with particular contexts, rules, needs and political possibilities. These categories, to put the matter another way, are not merely

categories, but, rather, *systems* of classification, systems through which we understand, gauge possibilities and act in our political worlds. Further, the categories through which we understand our political worlds are not merely (as if there were anything ‘mere’ about it) static systems of classification, but rather *practices* that we enact and carry out. Considered in relation to the systems and practices of classification through which political order is understood, the question of change becomes more complex and more troubling. It thus becomes necessary to interrogate the systems and practices that structure our thought, to examine precisely *how* possibilities of change are constrained. That is to say, to examine how practices of classification work politically.

Practices of classification are both obvious and obscure. What could be more obvious than a colour wheel, the metric system, the difference between ‘mainstream’ and ‘critical’ politics? While classification practices are both obvious and ubiquitous, we don’t tend to think about them very much. Yet, at the same time, we seek to apprehend novel or uncertain events, practices, ideas, and peoples through classification. What *kind* of event is this? What existing categories help us to understand the new situation? How can we build upon our existing knowledge? And, as Michel Foucault put it in his reading of Kant, “[w]hat is the present field of possible experiences?” (2007, 100). Given the significance of practices of classification in the understanding of political worlds, examinations of the politics involved in practices of classification themselves remain relatively rare.⁵ To this end, this dissertation explores how the politics of classification has functioned in modern political thought generally, and in relation to specific practices of dissent that claim, in various ways, emancipatory aims, focusing specifically on the

⁵ Notable exceptions include Hacking 2006, 2002, 1996, 1985; Foucault 2002; Nandy 1989 and 1987; Walker 1994 and 1988. In particular, the politics of classification have been examined in colonial contexts, as in, for instance, the aforementioned work of Ashis Nandy and that of Bernard Cohn (1996). See also Taschereau Mamers 2017, Stoler 2002 (“Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance”).

2009-2013 wave of global protests.⁶ By a politics of classification I mean the ways in which classification practices operate through sets of categories and languages that form the basis for political discourse and possibility or impossibility. Thus, to speak and to act in intelligible ways usually requires being implicated in long-reaching, historically-specific and politically-coercive orders of thought. Taking as my object of analysis the commentaries and descriptions of the protests and occupations of public space in post-2008 financial crisis southern Europe, the Occupy Wall Street movement, and the summer of 2013 protests in Turkey, Brazil and Bulgaria, I suggest that while protests, and mass practices of dissent more broadly, tend to be symptoms of political crises, they are also often indicative of crises of understanding, of attempts to understand our present situation and to trace a path for our political futures.⁷ In this way, through examining how practices of classification function at a particular stress point of possible political change, I demonstrate how our desires for change are constrained by our understandings of what change can possibly be.

The dissertation's specific focus of analysis is how key public commentators – from journalists to activists to academics – broadly on the left, or aligned with progressive or anarchist lines of thought, have attempted to explain the substance and future possibilities of the 2009-2013 wave of global protests. My claim is that these thinkers and activists have tended to overlook the politics of classification that proliferate within progressive politics. The chapters to follow develop an epistemological and political argument to explain this absence. Below, I discuss several possible explanations

⁶ I have made the deliberate decision not to explicitly classify the events or practices I discuss in this dissertation using particular or precise terminology. Thus, this text generally refers to “protests” or “practices of dissent,” but sometimes more broadly “events,” “phenomena,” or “movements.” While this may appear (or be) unclear, I have made this choice in an attempt to avoid the loaded definitions of each of these terms. By using them somewhat interchangeably, I aim to gesture away from determining the events I discuss.

⁷ Hannah Arendt’s reflections on Kant explicate this problem (1994 [1944]).

for the absence of serious accounts of the politics of classification in commentaries on practices of protest and dissent, noting the significance of commentators' enthusiasm, the political imperatives of intellectuals in dissent movements more broadly, and highlighting how the condition Walter Benjamin has called "left melancholy" limits the political possibilities imagined by commentators. Yet, I suggest that each of these explanations is symptomatic of the deeper problems of the politics of classification and what I call the epistemology of dissent that underpin the commentaries and which is the subject of the broader dissertation.

One possible explanation for the absence of a politics of classification in accounts of recent protests is that the commentators' enthusiasm for the events, the excitement of understanding the event as transformative, radical or revolutionary, overshadows the question of the politics of determining protests as particular *kinds* of events and the consequences of these determinations.⁸ For instance, Manuel Castells' 2012 monograph, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, which considers 2009-2011 as years of mass global protests, offers an example of this kind of enthusiasm, what Jean-Francois Lyotard has described, reading Kant, as a variation on the experience of the sublime (Lyotard 2009, 29). Castells begins the text with an expression of uncertainty: he is excited by the phenomena taking place, but also interested in contributing in ways otherwise, and in addition, to what he calls his "often confused activism" (xii). His aim, then, is to make a strategic intervention "with the hope of identifying the new paths of social change in our time" (4). He writes that he will:

not code the observation of these movements in abstract terms to fit into the conceptual approach presented here. Rather, my theory will be embedded in a selective observation of the movements, to bring together

⁸ On the effects of classificatory kinds, in a different context, see Hacking 2006, 1995, 1986.

at the end of my intellectual journey the most salient findings of this study in an analytical framework (2012, 17-18).

At the same time, the text proceeds through the elaboration of such an analytical network through the cases of protests in Tunisia and Iceland, while the rest of the book tests this model. Even though the theory is tentative, Castells is nonetheless interested in creating a model for understanding new forms of social change. Each chapter plays through the same set of moves, mapping movements onto the framework that Castells develops. Castells' own enthusiasm, then, moves from an experience of enthusiasm towards a practice of classification – from affect to analysis and a search for understanding. These classifications are further refined in Castells' 2015 second edition of *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, which considers subsequent protest events of 2013 and 2014.

Yet, as I noted above, this approach, in emphasizing the enthusiasm toward the event, tends to elide the reflexivity necessary to consider the politics – and political imperatives – through which Castells' own classifications of the events function, and their consequences. As Walker has put it in relation to an earlier wave of “new” social movements, it “is futile to try to gauge the importance of social movements without considering the possibility that it is precisely the criteria of significance by which they are to be judged that may be in contention” (1994, 672). Through what categories do we seek to understand protests and, importantly, why? This question, and Walker’s comment, does not necessarily mean that we should not seek to understand and examine contemporary protests and expressions of dissent. Rather, it is necessary, as scholars and commentators, to recognize both our own enthusiasm, and our tendencies to classify in particular ways.⁹

⁹ While this dissertation takes as its object of study the commentaries and descriptions or generally sympathetic and progressivist commentators, and often particularly scholarly commentators seeking to engage a more popular audience, I do not consider myself a detached outside observer – this project is an

There is an extensive literature on the role of intellectuals in dissent movements, and as activists and critics more broadly.¹⁰ Foucault commented that the French reaction to '68 was “a ‘crisis that was not only that of the university but also of the status and role of knowledge” (1998, 467). Similarly, Gilles Deleuze emphasizes the role of intellectuals as not merely representing events, but rather as themselves acting (1977a, 206-7). There is, contra-Antonio Gramsci, no longer a need for representation or guidance from intellectuals in order for dissent movements to express themselves; yet, while protestors may be able to express themselves, Foucault underlines the closures of unintelligibility in systems of power which “block... prohibit... and invalidate... this discourse [of dissent]” (207).

Edward Said’s collection of lectures entitled, *Representations of the Intellectual*, offers another set of approaches. Said writes that “one task of the intellectual is to break down the stereotypes and reductive categories that are so limiting to human thought and communication” (1996, xi). My aim here is to extend this imperative to considering our motivations and limits in seeking understanding through the particular set of categories and forms of classification that are described in the chapters to follow. Contemporary attempts at articulating what is going on appear to simultaneously celebrate, decry, and express ambivalence toward a potential novelty of the events vis-à-vis a diagnosis of the events and the times as novel, and at the same time, struggle with situating the events within a familiar vocabulary.

examination of the politics of classification of dissent as it has been practiced historically by commentators with similar sympathies and motivations to my own. My discussions seek to position myself as both sympathetic to and yet skeptical of the commentaries I examine here. To this end, one rhetorical practice I undertake is to alternately describe commentators as “they” and “we.”

¹⁰ See, for instance, Gramsci 1971, Mannheim 1979, Said 1996, Boggs 1993, Roszak 1968, Starr 1995, Bauman 1992 and 1987, Foucault 1984 and 1977a, Di Leo and Hitchcock 2016.

In the context of the commentaries with which this dissertation is engaged, then, the suggestion is that commentators must take account of the question of the limits of our own attempts at understanding. Indeed, as Foucault puts it, “[i]nтелlectuals are themselves agents of this system of power – the idea of their responsibility for ‘consciousness’ and discourse forms part of the system” (1977a, 207). Thus, the attempt to explain protest events, as I will discuss below, tends to have the effect of classifying them within a limited number of possible categories, or frames of understanding. Elsewhere, Foucault describes his “theoretical ethic” as:

‘antistrategic’: to be respectful when a singularity revolts, intransigent as soon as power violates the universal. A simple choice, a difficult job: for one must at the same time look closely, a bit beneath history, at what cleaves it and stirs it, and keep watch, a bit behind politics, over what must unconditionally limit it (2000, 453).

This simultaneity of examination of discontinuities and openings must also consider discursive limits – of the sayable, the knowable, the intelligible, and the ways in which one’s own (often enthusiastic and enthusiastically critical) work may reproduce and reify these limits. To put it more simply, there is an epistemological and a political question at stake in how scholars and commentators seek to understand protests and practices of dissent. This epistemological and political question requires a deeper examination of the choices we make and directions we take in attempting to explain these events.¹¹

Wendy Brown’s reformulation and analysis of Walter Benjamin’s concept of *left melancholy* offers yet another relevant lens for thinking about the impetuses, hopes and

¹¹ Such an examination has been made, in a different context, by Maria Stern, Stina Hansson and Sofie Hellberg in their edited volume, *Studying the Agency of Not Being Governed* (2014), where the editors suggest that the desires of researchers shape how we see political order. In so doing, they argue that researchers must be aware of this issue in their work, particularly when working on questions of agency and subjectification. This is an important line of thought, but I note it here in order to distinguish Stern, Hansson and Hellberg’s and my approaches. While their focus is on the subjectivity and agency of both the researcher and the researched, my problem deals rather with subjectivity and agency as *effects* of the epistemological and political questions of classification.

desires through which contemporary commentaries on protest operate. Brown writes that “*left melancholy* is Benjamin’s unambivalent epithet for the revolutionary hack who is, finally, attached more to a particular political analysis or ideal—even to the failure of that ideal—than to seizing possibilities for radical change in the present” (1999, 20). Though a perhaps unsympathetic reading of the aims and orientations of contemporary commentators, the concept of left melancholy is nonetheless helpful in parsing out the extent to which commentators both claim that the events of 2009-2013 were novel in many ways, and also describe them in terms altogether consistent with their own longstanding ideological attachments. It is also, perhaps, reflective of the after-effects of the enthusiasm described above, a desire to see a predetermined, and known, form come into being, a form that follows the excitement of the unknown.

David Graeber and Jodi Dean’s commentaries on Occupy Wall Street (OWS) offer two examples of such attachments. While Graeber has long discussed mass protests as exemplary of anarchist politics (2002), in his commentaries on OWS, he explicitly makes the case that the political activity of the movement is both a continuation of earlier anarchist movements (particularly the anti-globalization movements of the 1990s) and an expression of a fuller dimension of the politics of those movements (2011c, 2013). A renewed conception of democracy as full and direct participation within autonomous communities is, Graeber suggests, rooted in anarchist practices that reject existing structures in favour of the creation of new communities, rather than confrontation with the powers of the day. Democratic participation in autonomous communities thus produces and enacts a revolutionary imagination that broadens “people’s political horizons” (2013, Introduction). While there were clear and explicit anarchist politics informing the events of OWS, Graeber’s focus on classifying the event as a shift based

on, and informed by, anarchist currents is limiting to Graeber's own commitments to autonomous politics – the political horizon can only be a horizon imagined through an anarchist worldview, the categories of existing political order.

Jodi Dean's focus on OWS as the basis for a communist future is similarly limiting to the political possibilities of the event based on Dean's own ideological commitments. Like Graeber, Dean has written widely on how OWS is exemplary of particular political imperatives. For Dean, these political imperatives are the basis for a communist future, and, more immediately, "a communist horizon" (2012a, 2012b, 2011). Dean suggests that while it appears that protest movements have "lost sight of the communist horizon," contemporary movements like European anti-austerity movements and OWS may be regaining the possibility of such a vision. The "communist horizon," for Dean, enables the emergence and coalescence of revolutionary possibilities (2012a). In later work, Dean extends this argument to suggest that it is only through a party (with a vanguardist apparatus) that the revolutionary possibilities of the crowds gathered in protest can be realized (2015). Here, again, while there are clear anti-capitalist and socialist orientations within OWS, Dean's own emphasis on recuperating the event as indicative of a "communist horizon" is focused on Dean's own ideological commitments. Indeed, what these examples demonstrate, through their use of the very similar language of the "horizon" emergent from OWS and the focus on this horizon's anarchist and communist possibilities, is the work of a politics of classification in seeking to determine OWS as a particular *kind* of event from which particular kinds of possibilities emerge. This, however, can also be linked to the question of left melancholy, which, as Brown has argued, "signifies...a certain narcissism with regard to one's past political attachments and identity that exceeds any contemporary investment in political mobilization, alliance,

or transformation" (1999, 20). Brown further writes that what is needed to let go of "left melancholy":

would be a spirit that embraces the notion of a deep and indeed unsettling transformation of society rather than one that recoils at this prospect, even as we must be wise to the fact that neither total revolution nor the automatic progress of history will carry us toward whatever reformulated vision we might develop (1999, 26).

My concern, however, is that it is perhaps exactly this kind of a hope for a large-scale transformation of some kind that exemplifies what is perhaps a "reformulated vision" of left melancholy concerned with broad-based shifts and programs, as illustrated in the commentaries on the 2009-2013 events discussed in this dissertation. Indeed, while the commentators may discuss possible horizons for future visions, it is these horizons that are themselves constrained by deeper epistemological frames.

Foucault describes something like these epistemological frames and limits when he discusses the significance of commentary as the space of internal rules "concerned with the principles of classification" (1972b, 152), which help order societies. The horizon, then, functions as a limit. One such form of commentary is located in forms of questioning and drives to question. The emphases on defining and describing protests are often articulated through sets of questions and drives to questioning that are themselves heavily steeped in the critical traditions emerging from the Enlightenment. Many of the commentaries and commentators I examine in this dissertation exemplify both a struggle to identify a novelty in contemporary protest and a desire to *identify, describe and define* protests as linked to a particular set of historically articulable problems and aims.¹² Thus, the series of interrelated questions include those around demands-seeking in protest

¹² Comments on strategies and aims from activists and other protestors, while offering a slightly different dimension of analysis, are beyond the scope of this text, as I am here focused on the practices, effects and consequences of commentary as representing, describing and classifying protest.

(‘*What is the plan?*’ ‘*What are the aims?*’ ‘*What are their demands?*’ ‘*What is their programme?*’ ‘*What do they want?*’); questions around effects and the future of protests (‘*Can they be effective?*’ ‘*How effective can they be?*’ ‘*What have they/can they achieve(d)?*’), questions around the identities of the protestors (‘*Who are these people?*’ ‘*Are the people in the streets the ‘expected’ protestors?*’), and of course questions about the reasons for protesting (‘*Why is this protest happening?*’ ‘*Why are protests happening now?*’ ‘*What caused these protests?*’). Most simply, however, the questions that I probe are around explanations of ‘What is it?’ and ‘What is it *about*?’, questions that get at the problem and practice of classifying protest.

These questions are linked more broadly to a longstanding *practice of questioning* associated with *both* practices of classification and practices of critique. In the first instance, the “what is it?”, “what do they want?” and “what can they achieve?” kinds of questions that are often asked of protests reproduce a desire for an approach that seeks to name and classify what is going on rather than, for instance, inquiring into the way these practices are played out in the appearance and representation of the protest and the ways these representations, as classifications, affect and delimit subsequent events. These kinds of questioning imperatives are apparent in the work of Dean and Graeber, cited above. They are exemplary of a discursive practice of classification where the interrogative, as Gilles Deleuze has noted, “expresses the manner in which a problem is dismembered, cashed out and revealed, in experience and for consciousness, according to its diversely apprehended cases of solution” (1994, 157). That is to say that in posing a particular kind of question, we are already considering not only its answer, but that it *has* an answer. Further, as discussed above, the answer to a particular question may be a particular kind of ideological commitment – asking a particular *kind* of question enables a particular kind

of answer, and a particular kind of political horizon. It is important to note that I am not singling out Dean, or Graeber, or any of the commentators or theorists discussed in these pages in order to pose my own ‘better’ explanation. Rather, I am describing a quite deep problem of which their work is symptomatic.

In this sense, thinking through the questions asked *as* questions may be a helpful approach to thinking their limits. Questioning, as a form of Kantian critique, is particularly tied to a set of historical assumptions of knowledge. Both the possibility and delimitation of knowledge are possible through a practice of critique. In this way, critique – or classification – is both generative and limiting. This consideration of the question and practices of questioning can, I think, be helpfully elucidated through a reading of the problem of explaining protests, as articulated by Slavoj Zizek in his commentary on the summer 2013 protests in Turkey and Brazil. Zizek writes:

It is also important to recognise that the protesters aren’t pursuing any identifiable ‘real’ goal. The protests are not ‘really’ against global capitalism, ‘really’ against religious fundamentalism, ‘really’ for civil freedoms and democracy, or ‘really’ about any one thing in particular. What the majority of those who have participated in the protests are aware of is a fluid feeling of unease and discontent that sustains and unites various specific demands. The struggle to understand the protests is not just an epistemological one, with journalists and theorists trying to explain their true content; it is also an ontological struggle over the thing itself, which is taking place within the protests themselves. Is this just a struggle against corrupt city administration? Is it a struggle against authoritarian Islamist rule? Is it a struggle against the privatisation of public space? The question is open, and how it is answered will depend on the result of an ongoing political process (2013, 12).

This comment articulates the interstices of an epistemological problem, an ontological problem, and a political problem. Zizek notes that a clarity of goals is beside the point, and recognizes that there are multiple kinds of conceptual problems at stake that are not reducible to a question of an explanation or understanding. At the same time, he is

committed to an elucidation of “the thing itself”¹³ – an ontological struggle to elaborate, through the expression of protest, a response to questions around what protests are about – what they are, and what they are for. Yet, the question of the thing itself is a question of form, a distillation of a simple explanation like the ones above, of just what is going on, what the event looks like and why, and what is to be done. This question often seems to be framed as that which will guide a future world. “The question is open, and how it is answered will depend on the result of an ongoing political process,” (2013, 12) Zizek writes. It appears, however, as the following chapters will demonstrate, that the languages, categories, and narratives at our disposal for the description of protest seem to be inadequate to think through the politics of the event, or to reproduce the particular categories and futures desired by those doing the description.¹⁴ It often appears that practices of discussing protests – of trying to understand what is going on, or even to describe what may be creative approaches to alternative ways of life – effectively seek to articulate alternatives on the basis of discovering a better set of categories to describe what is going on. In so doing, they delimit and determine the “ongoing political process” they claim to celebrate.¹⁵

¹³ For Zizek, the “thing itself” is a much more complexly articulated problem, with Kantian, Hegelian and Lacanian inflections, which I won’t delve into here in great detail. One version of Zizek’s analysis is in his *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (2012).

¹⁴ Zizek does begin to suggest that – for a political struggle – the concepts we have available may not contain the clarity of purpose that they appear to. He insists that any political strategy must take into account “the complexity of overdetermination,” where seeking a particular aim (“democratic freedom”) may turn out to entail discovering that democratic freedom does not encompass all that it claims to. “What we first took as a failure fully to apply a noble principle (democratic freedom) is in fact a failure inherent in the principle itself.” This realization, Zizek notes, “is a big step in a political education.” Yet, in making this point, Zizek suggests that further clarity around the concepts as demands might be necessary.

¹⁵ It is important to note my own diagnosis here is not a diagnosis of an *empirical* problem – it is an *epistemological* one. That is to say, it is my view that empirical change is occurring, *something* is happening in the streets, it’s our problems with understanding it that are at issue here. More specifically, the empirical novelty or movement towards new forms of politics or subjectivity or authority are not in question here; rather, I seek to pay attention to the consequences of our confidence in the categories through which we seek to understand protests and practices of dissent.

The epistemology of dissent

In the chapters below, I will argue that the relative lack of attention paid to the politics of classification by participants and commentators in progressive politics is symptomatic of a hegemony of particular classificatory practices and categories – a hegemony of forms of explanation and interpretation, which I call the epistemology of dissent. In this sense, this dissertation offers an attempt at elucidating how an epistemology of dissent functions in specific contexts, places and times, through practices of classification. In particular, I will argue that this hegemony of form is historically constituted through the particular mode of knowledge associated with European modernity and modern forms of thought, as articulated around the thinking subject.

The core problem of the epistemology of dissent as will be described theoretically in Chapters One and Two, and demonstrated through the case studies in Chapters Three, Four, and Five, is that most of the progressive political literature rests upon two contrary, competing, and sometimes overlapping modern European lines of thought, both of which are conceptual ‘dead ends’, so to speak. The first of these lines of thought is that associated with a Hegelian and/or Marxian tradition. This tradition involves a specific, progressivist theory of the subject, and subjective emancipation through history. However, lines of thought associated with this tradition tend to be reductionist and inflexible towards their ideological commitments. The second line of thought is that associated with a Kantian tradition and its inheritances, which I here read mainly through Foucault. This tradition is not reductionist in the same way as the Hegelian/Marxian, and involves both an ontological and an epistemological theory of classification, but is constrained by its own constitutive limits, as I’ll discuss.

The core issue at stake in these lines of thought is the relationship between subjectivity and temporality. Thus, a key problem for this dissertation is the degree to

which a politics of classification hinges upon a theory of the subject, as an agent of emancipation. This relationship between subjectivity and temporality plays out on multiple conceptual terrains, and through multiple analogues, including relationships between form and change, universality (or totalization) and particularity, and subject and object. Much of the contemporary progressive political literature reproduces both these classifications and the relationships between them, and remains tied up with overdetermined commitments to ideology, emancipation, and the modern subject. In my analysis, Kantian/Foucauldian lines of thought become critical of Hegelian/Marxian lines of thought, where the Kantian/Foucauldian assumes the modern subject, but rejects the Hegelian teleology of the modern subject as emancipatory agent. Thus, I conclude that overlooking the politics of classification is a major problem for any progressive emancipatory project, because classification is a key aspect of modern emancipatory thought and action. An account of a politics of classification that is neither reductive nor a theory of the emancipatory subject, but remains critical, is elusive. While Foucault, in his archaeologies and other work on Kant, offers what is, to my view, the clearest cartography of the problem of a politics of classification, as Chapter One will explain, his analysis is deeply aporetic and ultimately remains unsatisfactory. Thus, as the trajectories this dissertation will follow and the conclusion will affirm, the politics of classification, as they function in relation to attempts to understand practices of dissent, become classifications of politics. Indeed, as will become clear, the present study has imposed its own classification.

The constitutive presence and absence of the colonial

This introduction, and this dissertation, focus on the specificity of the history of epistemological frames we moderns have inherited from European modernity, and, in

particular, from Enlightenment thought. Similarly, the descriptions of the protests and occupations of public space in post-2008 financial crisis southern Europe, the Occupy Wall Street movement, and the summer of 2013 protests in Turkey, Brazil and Bulgaria, are commentaries by European and American journalists, activists and academics on primarily European and American events, treated as already ‘modern’ European and American events that seek a changing political order.

As noted above, my aim in this project is to unpack the modern epistemological forms, emerging from the European Enlightenment, through which understandings of possible substantive change in political order is shaped and constrained. In particular, I am interested in how, and through which categories, influential, progressivist commentators classify protests and practices of dissent in seeking to understand them. This is a project that delves into the epistemological frames that make certain ways of thinking possible and desirable, and others impossible, unthinkable, or undesirable. These epistemological frames, as modern inheritances, as I have suggested, also function as limits to understandings of the possible and possible change. They are, however, much more than that. The epistemological forms through which modern knowledge is constituted also create their constitutive outside in the form of the colonial, or the non-European, in the form of knowledge, culture and subjectivity.¹⁶ In the epistemological frameworks of European modernity, that which has been constituted as the colonial, or the non-West, is a *necessary* constitutive absence (Pasha 2010, 218). As Anibal Quijano has put it, the “confluence between coloniality and the elaboration of

¹⁶ The co-constitution of the modern and the colonial has been widely theorized. See, for instance, Mignolo 2011, 2007, and 2002; Quijano 2007; Pasha 2010; Shilliam 2010; Venn and Featherstone 2006. Quijano, in particular, clearly articulates the structure and stakes of the modernity/coloniality relationship vis-à-vis modern subjectivity. Shilliam elaborates the later, 19th and 20th century, means through which comparative studies disciplines affirmed the ‘othering’ of places outside the West, from Hegel to Huntington (2010, 15-18).

rationality/modernity was not in anyway accidental” (2007, 172). Indeed, the colonial is the difference from which the modern requires to be distinguished (Pasha 2010, 217). As Walter Mignolo has famously argued, “[c]oloniality...is constitutive of modernity—there is no modernity without coloniality” (2011, 3). That is to say, the epistemological forms through which a concept of the modern, and its attendant aims of epistemological progress and subjective emancipation, are articulated in relation to a necessary outside in the form of the colonial, or non-European.

In this way, the structure of modern knowledge and subjectivity, as fundamentally individualist, denies the intersubjectivity of the relationship required for the production of knowledge (Quijano 2007, 172). The ‘other,’ as Quijano and others have put it, is almost entirely absent from the individualistic understanding of knowledge, or, when present, is present only in an objectified form, raced and distinguished from European ‘subjects’ (Quijano 200; Shilliam 2010).¹⁷ Yet, to insist upon this absence is unsound, as the very idea of ‘Europe,’ or the ‘West,’ or the ‘modern’ is, Quijano argues, “an admission of identity – that is, of relations with other cultural experiences, of differences with other cultures” (2007, 173). Thus, the very structure of European knowledge – and power – was established in relation to the objectification and absenting of non-European ‘others’ as subjects and of non-European thought as knowledge. Further, while Euro-modern thought presupposes a totality, the non-European is not included in that totality. The social, or society, as elaborated in nineteenth-century thought, and the subject of emancipation of revolutionary thought through the twentieth-century, are also excluded, as the European conception of society is homogenous, in a way that the colonial order cannot be (Quijano 2007, 176). It is important to note that in emphasizing how

¹⁷ I briefly discuss this objectified form in the history of the practice of classification in Chapter One.

commentaries on practices of dissent function through classification to limit forms of subjectivity, I am not denying the formation of the many forms of subjectivity formed through and against colonial contestations (Shilliam 2010; el-Malik 2013). At the same time, however, I will discuss the question of the compatibility of the principle of subjectivity with many different kinds of subjectivities in Chapter Four.

The arguments above are not new. It is clear that the power and knowledge structures of modernity are not only intertwined with each other, but also with a necessarily absent ‘other,’ in the form of that which has been constituted as the colonial or colonized as non-modern. The reproduction of these forms of knowledge is apparent in the context of practices of dissent and, in particular, the European and American protests on which the commentaries analysed in these pages are focused. By way of example, I would like to draw attention to how the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement and its commentators were criticized for their whiteness, Eurocentrism and tone-deaf rhetoric with regard to questions of race and Indigeneity.

From the early days of OWS, critical commentators noted that the movement had a “whiteness problem” (Patton 2011), where the claims and aims of those on the ground and those commenting on events focused on the promises denied to white Euro-American subjects – promises of freedom, equality and emancipation. As Nathalie Thandiwe, a New York radio host and producer notes, “Occupy Wall Street was started by whites and is about their concern with their plight... [n]ow that capitalism isn’t working for ‘everybody,’ some are protesting” (quoted in Patton 2011).

While the question that galvanized OWS, that of the 99% as seeking a kind of inclusivity and a liberal universalism, emphasized economic inequality, it fundamentally denied the deep differences between the inequalities experienced by white protestors (and

those for whom they claimed to speak) and the inequalities experienced by those from racialized and Indigenous communities, for whom these inequalities are experienced in very different, and often more violent ways (Patton 2011, Farrow 2011, Davis 2013). In so doing, the 99% moniker with which OWS was so deeply identified reproduced Euro-modern assumptions of a homogenous society. A particularly stark reminder of the absence of racialized and colonial difference from the foundations of the OWS movement is the initial framing of the Zuccotti Park (New York) group's "Declaration of the Occupation of New York City", which began, "As one people, formerly divided by the color of our skin, we acknowledge the reality: that there is only one race, the human race" (cited in Grande 2013, 372). While this wording was eventually changed,¹⁸ both the original draft and the final version elide the ways in which the declaration documents emphasize questions of emancipation in their modern, individualist forms.¹⁹ This framing, and that the processes of the OWS encampments in New York and elsewhere, failed to attract or largely include Black, Indigenous and people of colour and their communities, were repeatedly noted in the media.²⁰

OWS's rhetorical frames, and particularly the language of occupation, also drew early criticism from Indigenous activists, who pointed out that Wall Street, and all of the other North American OWS sites, had been occupied Indigenous territory for quite some time.²¹ The language of occupation, assuming the occupation of capitalist spaces,

¹⁸ The new version reads "As one people, united, we acknowledge the reality: that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members; that our system must protect our rights, and upon corruption of that system, it is up to the individuals to protect their own rights, and those of their neighbors..." The full declaration is available online at

<https://archive.org/details/DeclarationOfTheOccupationOfNewYorkCity>

¹⁹ For further discussion of the rhetorical frames of OWS vis-à-vis Black Americans, see Farrow 2011.

²⁰ See Patton 2011 and Farrow 2011.

²¹ See Montano 2011, Yee 2011 and Barker 2011, as cited in Grande 2013. On the struggles around questions of 'occupation' and Indigenous territory, as they were expressed by OWS leaders in various

presumes that these spaces are open to further occupation and affirms the absence (and erasure) of the Indigenous territories and the colonial practices through which this absence functions.²² As Grande puts it, “the discursive trope and strategy of ‘occupation’ reconstitutes (territorial) appropriation as the democratic manifest and, in so doing, fails to propose something distinct from or counter to the settler state” (2013, 370). As I will argue in Chapter 5, the protests’ imagined alternatives, in positioning themselves in relation to the modern (settler) state, reproduce a set of limits and relationships vis-à-vis orientations to and forms of authority.

Grande’s argument goes further than pointing out effects of OWS’s tone deaf rhetoric, however, and, in so doing, pushes against the epistemological assumptions on which OWS’s claims to emancipation were lodged. Rather, Grande takes OWS as a specific instantiation of the forms of knowledge through which liberal subjects are affirmed and constituted against “other,” non-subjects who she calls “surplus subjects,” after Angela Davis (2013, 370). The aim, as she notes, is to “work beyond a simple rehashing of the philosophical limits of liberalism and examine the *political function* of liberal discourse in solidifying settler colonialism” (370). In this way, Grande emphasizes how ideological systems work (and have always worked) politically to reproduce and enforce the absence of certain kinds of subjects and knowledges. In the case of OWS, the ideological systems involved (while they may explicitly disavow liberalism, as I’ll discuss in Chapters Three, Four and Five), function through the “presupposition that the

Canadian cities, see Kilibarda 2012.

²² As I write in the preface to this dissertation, this question of occupation was not lost on the participants in OWS events in the city in which most of this dissertation was written, Victoria, British Columbia. To this end, the protest event in Victoria was called not Occupy Victoria, but rather the “People’s Assembly of Victoria” (PAOV). The documents created by the PAOV can be accessed via <https://www.paov.ca/mediamenu/press-releases/29-declaration-of-the-people-s-assembly-of-victoria>.

just principles of a new social order can be arrived at deductively from a liberal theory of justice" (374).

Grande's argument, in pushing beyond "a simple rehashing of the philosophical limits of liberalism," seeks to both uncover how liberalism works to affirm settler colonialism's erasure of Indigenous lands and subjects and recover the erasure of Indigenous knowledges, which, she argues, have been the subject of an "epistemicide" (376). While it may appear that this aim challenges my project, which is concerned with the internal limits of modern forms of knowledge, I view my work as parallel to Grande's. In foregrounding the practices of classification through which modern forms of knowledge, and particularly understandings of dissent have functioned, my work broadens Grande's problematique beyond liberalism to liberalism's ideological challenges in Euro-modern thought, Marxist and anarchist-influenced progressivist thought. In so doing, my project demonstrates the internal ethnocentrism which functions as a constraint on possibilities of change. For instance, the opening of Foucault's *The Order of Things* famously begins with a riff on Borges' "Chinese Encyclopedia" as demonstrating "the exotic charm of another system of thought... the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*" (2002, xviii). The consequence of the encounter with the Chinese encyclopedia, Foucault writes, is "the laughter that shattered... all the familiar landmarks of *our* [emphasis added] thought" (xviii). Responding to this reading in a personal communication, Sam Opondo has asked, why must it be laughter? Why is the response to difference then laughter, amusement?²³ Why can't we European moderns take the other seriously, in addition to pondering the

²³ Opondo's comments were made as part of a conversation at the Gregynog Ideas Lab, in Newtown, Wales, July 2017.

absurdity of our universalizing, seemingly unshakeable classification systems? While it is clear that the Western self must be interrogated, and it is indeed difficult, from such a position as Foucault's, to do much else responsibly, this shattering laughter has the Enlightenment-era consequence of producing or consuming an other for the purposes of re-producing, re-creating the self. Who are we, so that we need to *laugh* at the other, in order to shake the landmarks of our thought? Indeed, Foucault later notes that “[t]hat passage from Borges kept me laughing a long time, though not without a certain uneasiness that I found hard to shake off” (xix). For Foucault, this uneasiness is around *heteroclite* orders, states where “things are ‘laid,’ ‘placed,’ ‘arranged,’ in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all” (2002, xix). There is, then, there, a question of an irreducible significance of difference, through the laughter, an uneasiness which is not, perhaps interrogated as a seriousness, as Foucault turns again inwardly for the remainder of the text, as it is difficult to face “the uneasiness that makes us laugh when we read Borges is certainly related to the profound distress of those whose language has been destroyed: loss of what is ‘common’ to place and name. Atopia. Aphasia” (xx).

Given the focus of my project, as elaborated in this introduction, examinations of the knowledge practices and forms of classification involved in examining protests outside Europe and North America are beyond the scope, as are the very significant questions of the ways in which Euro-modern forms of knowledge have been and can be challenged by non-Western thought.²⁴ As Ashis Nandy has pointed out, however, such

²⁴ There is a growing body of literature on the ways in which “non-Western thought” is mobilized and recovered in challenge to dominant Euro-modern and colonial forms of knowledge. See, for instance, Shilliam 2010; Pasha 2010; Mignolo 2012, 2011, 2007 and 2002; Tickner and Blaney 2012; Aguirre 2018; Manuel and Posluns 2018; Nandy 1989 and 1987.

challenges are particularly difficult, as dissent may not be “audible” if not voiced in the categories of Euro-modern forms of knowledge, what Nandy refers to in the epigraph of this introduction, as “the idiom of modernity” (1989, 271). Indeed, how could it be anything else, when possibilities of change are structured through modern forms of knowledge, and non-Western voices and ways of knowing have been constituted as outside? Elsewhere, Nandy notes that it is not “by meekness alone” that the meek inherit the earth. Rather, it is through the “*categories, concepts* and, even, *defences of mind*” that create the distinctions between the modern West and its outsides (2009, xiii). I discuss this problematique in more detail in Chapters Three and Four.

Plan of the dissertation

This project undertakes to elucidate the epistemology of dissent through a critical historical cartography. By critical historical cartography I mean the description of a space of a problem in a way that defines what the problem *is*. That is to say, I seek to articulate an epistemology of dissent by examining the significance of historically specific practices of classification in how contemporary commentators have attempted to understand the 2009-2013 wave of protests. The first two chapters articulate the theoretical problems of classification and the politics of classification as they have developed through the Kantian and Hegelian/Marxian threads described above. The final three chapters focus on the commentaries on the 2009-2013 protests by demonstrating how an epistemology of dissent works through classification by way of three main sites: claims to novelty and the novelty of the present moment; articulations of new forms of subjectivity; and claims to new relationships to and of authority. Each of these three case study chapters offers different insights into how the epistemology of dissent functions through historically specific forms of knowledge, which are dependent on the modern subject.

Chapter One articulates both the dissertation's methodological approach and offers a reading of the emergence of the politics of classification in European modernity, primarily through Michel Foucault's formulation in *The Order of Things*. The approach is informed by Lorraine Daston's work on historical epistemology, Ian Hacking's work on practices of classification in "the human sciences," and Foucault's work on archaeologies or histories of orders of knowledge. These approaches are particularly instructive because they emphasize what can be known at any given time, how epistemological frames – or epistemes – enable particular classificatory categories in different historical periods. This chapter discusses early modern nominalist understandings of classification in order to set up the significance of what Foucault has called the modern episteme as key to understanding the contemporary epistemology of dissent. I outline the Kantian tradition in progressive political thinking and link it to a politics of classification. In particular, through Foucault, I discuss the emergence of the figure of man as both the subject and object of order-making practices. I argue that the unstable figure of man as defining concept of the modern episteme is key to understanding the epistemology of dissent. The problematic of man as closed system opens onto the questions of novelty, subjectivity and authority with which subsequent chapters are concerned.

Chapter Two presents the Hegelian/Marxian tradition in progressive political thinking through an examination of Georgy Lukács', Antonio Gramsci's and Karl Mannheim's thinking on revolution and political transformation. I suggest that, like the later commentators examined in Chapters Three, Four and Five, these thinkers viewed the period in which they lived as a period of indeterminacy and crisis to which their work responded. However, I argue that their understanding of practices of dissent, while ultimately focusing on Hegelian/Marxian lines of thought (this is not the case for

Mannheim), is informed by a much broader epistemological approach that incorporates both Kantian and Romantic thinking. I read Lukács, Gramsci and Mannheim through three themes that connect their work to each other and to the classification of contemporary protests I address in later chapters. I begin by examining these thinkers' diagnoses of the times in which they live; then address how these diagnoses contribute to their theorization of subjectivity, subjective consciousness, and subjective emancipation; and finally discuss how they each come to frame the possibility of emancipation or transformation through totalization, universalization, or synthesis. I show how each of these thinkers formulate a concrete set of transformative or emancipatory aims, while recognizing the difficulty in seeking certainty or systematicity in an age of ambivalence and disenchantment, and revising their analyses accordingly. Ultimately, however, each of these thinkers comes to a Hegelian/Marxian conclusion that requires a totalization of political and epistemological order that is untenable.

Chapters Three, Four and Five extend the insights of Chapters One and Two and apply them to an examination of sympathetic progressivist commentaries on the 2009-2013 wave of protests. In these chapters, I demonstrate how, despite claims to novelty, longstanding categories of dissent are replicated in these commentaries. Chapter Three focuses on commentaries that claim that the protests of 2009-2013 were expressions of novel forms and practices of protest and, as such, symptomatic of a novel spatiotemporal present. Examining claims to novelty around protests' affective narratives, communications networks, and political expression, I suggest that there appears to be an absence of categories to fit the times, despite claims to novelty, and that commentators draw not only on existing categories but also on existing practices of classification to fill this absence. Reading claims to novelty in the protests through Castells, Zizek and

Graeber, among other thinkers, I argue that the claim to novelty, to the diagnosis of the present, is itself a thoroughly modern category, and it is *through* claims to novelty that modern expressions of dissent have been, and are, articulated.

Chapter Four centers one of the claims to novelty in Chapter Three: the claim to novel forms of subjectivity emerging through the protests. Drawing on the anarchist roots of claims to novel subjectivity in the past thirty years of commentaries on protests and mass practices of dissent and juxtaposing them to the analysis of the subject in Chapter Two, I focus on claims of new forms of plural subjectivity, as articulated by contemporary commentators in the forms of the crowd, the multitude, and the networked individual (Dean 2015, Zevnik 2015; Hardt and Negri 2017, 2005; Castells 2012, 2015; Mason 2013a, 2013b; Krastev 2014). While commentators view shifts of consciousness as significant to the expression of new forms of subjectivity, I suggest that this view is indicative of a long modern tradition of emancipation that requires the figure of the modern subject. Thus, I conclude that while the figure of the subject can be pluralized, the desire for emancipation requires the principle of modern subjectivity as the focus of emancipation. In this sense, the commentaries on the contemporary protests are not moving away from Enlightenment ideals of the modern subject, but reproducing it as an ideal.

In Chapter Five, I redirect my concerns to the problem of desires for novelty and, more specifically, for alternatives. I focus on how two main lines of alternatives have been articulated by commentators on the 2009-2013 protests: a horizontalist or anarchist set of alternatives associated with autonomy and consensus building (Graeber 2013, 2011c; Day 2013, 2005), and a communist or Marxist set of alternatives focused on broad structural transformation and the ideals of European modernity (freedom, universality,

progress) (Dean 2015, 2012a; Srnicek and Williams 2015). I suggest that these lines of alternatives are variations on the Kantian and Hegelian/Marxian themes discussed above – they replicate the longstanding distinction between Enlightenment and Romantic traditions. In particular, I argue that these two variations have become *the* primary forms the articulation of alternatives can take. As such, they are themselves authoritative as effects of classification. I conclude that it is not only the form, but rather the *relation* between forms (horizontalism and communism/Marxism) that is standardized and standardized as a form of self-authorizing and as orientation to structures of authority, a practice of classification in a closed system of alternatives.

Reflecting on the 2009-2013 protests three to five years later, commentators' assessments have not shifted significantly (Hardt and Negri 2017, Dean 2015, Heller 2017, White 2016) and repeat the same cycles of claims about emotions, novelty and subjectivity. Examined through the lens of an epistemology of dissent, what this repetition, in addition to commentaries discussed in Chapters Three, Four and Five, suggests is the persistence of the desire for the emancipation of the modern subject. It is not only that there is a lack of new categories through which to describe recent practices of dissent. It is not merely that commentators' own ideological commitments determine how they will describe the events and the possibilities implicit therein. Rather, this dissertation suggests that the desire for the emancipation of the modern subject means that we cannot *afford* to see new categories, lest we lose sight of our subjectivity.

Chapter 1: Historical cartographies of classification: The order and limits of modern knowledge and subjectivity

[A] particular discourse cannot be resolved by a prior system of significations; that we should not imagine that the world presents us with a legible face, leaving us merely to decipher it; it does not work hand in glove with what we already know; there is no pre-discursive fate disposing the world in our favour. We must conceive discourse as a violence that we do to things, or, at all events, as a practice we impose upon them; it is in this practice that the events of discourse find the principle of their regularity. – Michel Foucault, “The Discourse on Language”

If one assumes, as I do, that modes of representation inform what we can know, and if one also assumes, as I do, that modes of representation embody or articulate available ways of organizing and making sense of the world, then to understand the potential and limitations of what we know, we need tools to investigate the conditions of possibility that make knowledge possible. – Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact*

I fear we shall never rid ourselves of God, since we still believe in grammar. – Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*

In the Enlightenment Room²⁵

I find myself at the British Museum on the recommendation of a professor who suggests that, given my interest in the history of ideas and their ordering, the Enlightenment Gallery would be the one spot in the Museum I really should see. The Enlightenment Gallery – The Museum’s Room 1 – is located just off the Great Court, a massive open space filled with visitors and an expansive gift shop. Walking in, I see a large gilded compass and a placard entitled “Classifying the World.” Floor to ceiling bookshelves housed the library of George III²⁶ and display cases are evenly spread throughout, showing the collections of the British Museum’s main benefactor, Sir Hans Sloane, a physician, traveller, collector, and the president of the Royal Society after Isaac Newton. The Enlightenment Gallery doesn’t seem to be a major attraction, and the knots of people I worked through in the Great Court mostly don’t wander here. Perhaps visitors are more mesmerized by the exoticisms in the Viking and Pharaoh galleries, the

²⁵ An extended version of this section was published in *Peninsula: Journal of Relational Politics* 3(1).

²⁶ While the Gallery is housed in the space of the King’s Library, George III’s books and papers have been transferred to the British Library. The books lining the shelves of the Enlightenment Gallery are on loan from the Parliament Library.

Parthenon marbles and their narratives of civilizational origins (and imperialist looting), than in examining the epistemological underpinnings of the whole venture. Is it because the modes of understanding represented in the Enlightenment room are so integrated into our own ways of thinking that they appear a bit boring? Aren't museums spaces where we go to see the unfamiliar? Or to learn something new about what we think we already know? Perhaps this is why I feel at home here, staring at the "Classifying the World" placard – there is a comfort in the ordering that accompanies the feeling of being overwhelmed by all of these objects.²⁷

There are twenty-four numbered cases altogether, and I can look at them in order, or not, instructs the map. In this sequence, "Classifying the World" is in the middle, "The Natural World" beginning the sequence on the right side of the room and "Trade and Discovery" closing the sequence on the left. I move around the cases, snapping pictures of the ceremonial and spiritual belongings, some of which I know are the subject of ongoing struggles between the museum and the people from whose ancestors they were taken.²⁸ Case 7 ("The History of Art") offers a narrative of the diversity of classifying practices, the different modes of arranging undertaken by collectors like Sloane. Sometimes, objects would be arranged by subject, sometimes by use (for war, for

²⁷ The British Museum, at its founding in 1753 was aimed at collecting the ordinary as well as the exotic – its initial aim, in fact, was the universality so inextricable from Enlightenment aims. It was only in the late 19th century that the museum focused in on collecting cultural objects, as its scientific collections were transferred to the Natural History Museum, and its fine arts collections to the National Gallery, among others (See Sloan and Burnett 2003). In this sense, the Enlightenment Gallery is a representation of an earlier form of knowledge collecting and classifying, a form that nonetheless seems quite familiar, even though distinct from the museum's current mission.

²⁸ Years ago, when the British Museum's "Hidden Treasures" exhibit came to the Royal BC Museum in Victoria, a friend joked that it should be called "Stolen Treasures," and commented that her community was in litigation with the British Museum to retrieve a ceremonial object housed there. Subsequently, I've come to find out that there is a large literature on the repatriation of indigenous objects from museums. See, for example, the debate in the media around the "Indigenous Australia: Enduring Civilization" exhibition at the British Museum (Farago 2015, Daley 2015). In British Columbia, the Haida have been involved in a long-standing negotiation with the British Museum (among others) for the use and return of Haida sacred objects and human remains (see *Skidgate Repatriation and Cultural Committee*, repatriation.ca). For more general reflections on the Canadian context of repatriation struggles, see Fisher 2012; Bell and Napoleon (eds.) 2008.

transport). Sometimes chronologically, “to relate to the rise and fall of civilizations.” Sometimes by whether or not an object, as in the case of French collector Bernard de Montfaucon’s prints, was religious or secular. In these modes of collecting and arranging — “typical of many European ‘cabinets of curiosity’” as Case 14, “Curiosity and Curiosities” explains — there is a narrative about the drawing of a boundary between the classical and the modern, between cataloguing curiosities for the sake of cataloguing and cataloguing for grander purposes. As Huxley puts it in his companion piece to the opening of the Enlightenment Gallery, Enlightenment thinkers believed that “if they could use observation and classification to unravel the mysteries of the natural world, the knowledge and the methods used to achieve it could also be applied to the human and economic worlds for the benefit of mankind” (2003, 79).

Here, Sloane, “old fashioned even by the standards of his own day,” is influenced by the transformations in science and the study of cultures. Sloane’s emphasis was on the collection of natural specimens and their display, collecting as many specimens as possible, from as many places as possible, and demonstrating “the wonders of God’s universe to mankind” (Syson 2003, 110), focusing especially on rare and exotic examples from distant places. In this sense, Sloane’s collections are akin to the cabinets of curiosity that predated museums like the British Museum, where his collections were intended to “satisfy or stimulate a type of enquiry that was both legitimately all-encompassing and somewhat arbitrary” (115).²⁹

Yet, Case 12 (“Revolution in Science”) reminds us, somewhat wistfully, that Sloane’s collecting interests are on the wrong side of progress. While the Royal Society, at the time of his tenure and thereafter, was interested in conducting experiments to

²⁹ There is an extensive literature on the history of cabinets of curiosity in Europe from the 15th to the 19th centuries. For more detailed examination, see, for example, Yaya 2008, and, especially, MacGregor 2007.

demonstrate scientific principles and creating new instruments to further the understanding of the laws of nature, Sloane remained a collector of ephemera, beautiful objects that illustrated different “approaches to science across time and place.” By contrast, George III, the Enlightenment Room’s other main benefactor, was enamored with the most modern instruments, those that “illustrated contemporary theories of science,” establishing the ways in which Europeans could come to know the changing world. George III wanted to see his collection “in action” and was less interested in collecting as such (Ackermann and Wess 2003, 155). For George III, the beautiful objects in his collection had to work as tools, to demonstrate the laws of nature that Enlightenment scholars were intent on discerning. There seems to be more than a simple distinction on the order of progressive scientism between Sloane, the old-fashioned collector-scientist and George III, the cutting edge ruler-scientist. There is, as Ackerman and Wess put it, “a difference of attitude rather than one of subject matter” (2003, 154). While Sloane, as a natural historian, was interested in collecting and observing, for George III, the experimental philosopher, the aim is to intervene as a way of learning. Both seem driven by curiosity, but how does curiosity become order? What kind of order? And for whom? What happens to curiosities when they are classified in different ways? Sloane’s and George III’s approaches, as represented by the Enlightenment Gallery’s narratives and classifications, are studies in curiosities. Curiosity – a noun describing the odd objects represented here; curiosity – an abstract noun describing the search for the not-yet-knowns that are the promise of Enlightenment.

The historian of science Lorraine Daston writes that curiosity itself underwent a dramatic transformation in the 16th and 17th centuries, in tandem with both revolutions in science and colonization. While for medieval Christians like Saint Augustine curiosity

was associated with lust and pride, a loss of self, by the mid-sixteenth century it was well on its way to becoming viewed as a virtue, what Daston describes as “a form of insatiable, if esoteric consumerism,” an active pursuit of self-mastery (1995, 391-397). By the seventeenth century, empiricist curiosity was linked to a kind of focused attentiveness, and the drive to record everything – an inquisitiveness – was becoming linked to a drive to consume it – an acquisitiveness. For Daston, this “emotional restructuring of early modern curiosity” begins to shape “both the objects and subjects of early modern science” (1995, 391). There is, Daston suggests, a “structural affinity” between curiosity and the market for luxuries – both insatiable. This was “decisive for the chosen objects of curiosity in early-modern science” – the objects in cabinets of curiosity like Sloane’s were rare, exotic luxuries, collected from afar, and their value was *exchange* value, not use value (Daston 1995, 396-7).

George III’s collections take on a different inflection when considering the relationship between inquisitiveness and acquisitiveness. As Kim Sloan, the curator of the Enlightenment Gallery explains, George III’s interest in the navy led to advances in navigation, and made possible expeditions such as those of Captain James Cook (funded by Hans Sloane and the Royal Society), leading to a growth in knowledge new to Europeans, with both natural and human-created objects making their way to the British Museum (Sloan 2003, 23). Here, the link between scientific and colonial advancements becomes more evident, and empiricist curiosity and colonial acquisitions become intertwined.

As I make my way around the edges of the room I find myself perhaps more mesmerized by its organization than by its contents, by the centralization of the classification of collections inasmuch as the collections themselves. I find it difficult to

do anything other than enumerate – organize and reorganize, study and teach myself these systems. I've spent most of my time here reading the placards and thinking about the way they frame these collections. I'm sucked into re-classifying. Are the objects themselves important now? In the Enlightenment Room, can they be anything more than the classifications they enable and mobilize?

Opened in 2003 as part of the museum's 250th anniversary celebrations, the Enlightenment room "aims to recreate the experience of a museum visitor in the early years of the British Museum from its foundation in 1753 to the death of George III in 1820" ("Accessing Enlightenment," n.d., 1). In my explorations, I've found the room to be like a massive cabinet of curiosities, where curiosity is foregrounded as an impetus for the distinctiveness of the Enlightenment. This, it seems, may have been Sloan's aim as she recreated how the museum appeared to its eighteenth century visitors for twenty-first century eyes.

Given the stunning novelty of the age, how could classification be anything but a necessary tool to make sense of this novelty? How might visitors to the museum view the wider world that the museum's collections open to them, but through some kind of order? The gallery's central orienting description – "Classifying the World" – explains just this: the Enlightenment proliferation of classification systems to organize the many novel objects and ideas with which seventeenth and eighteenth century Europeans were faced. Based on perceived similarities and differences, and ordered along trajectories of progress and decline, these classification systems attempt to gain knowledge about a world growing larger, denser and more complex through its ordering into manageable orders. These orders, by the late 18th century, are transposed to and encompass every aspect of human life from biological discoveries and mathematical regularities, to the

religious practices of distant peoples and the emergent legal orders of nascent post-revolutionary European states. Despite – or perhaps because of – my immersion in these stories, I feel an incredulity at the obviousness of the order, and the obviousness with which this obviousness is presented. It seems a given that these collections were “arranged to gain knowledge about the world, past and present.” Is it just as obvious that “[d]uring the Enlightenment, many people believed that lack of social and moral progress stemmed from ignorance about the world, its natural phenomena and its human history[?]” That, perhaps, one doesn’t have to think about George III’s interests in the advancement of science to consider Enlightenment practices of classification a political project? The breadth of these Enlightenment projects is breathtaking to my mind, a mind also trained in the period’s modes of persistent questioning of the conditions of possibility for such orders. An anxiety crystallizes upon consideration of the way, in its attempt to display the orders of Enlightenment pursuits of knowledge through classification and representation, the exhibit must, of course, itself reproduce and represent these classifications.

The exhibit smoothes over many of the debates about the ordering it displays – the politics through which these classifications emerged.³⁰ I wonder about assumptions of the possibility of scientific certainty and the European, and specifically British, management of human and natural worlds. Somehow, my visit to the Enlightenment room showcases both the crucial role of practices of classification to Enlightenment and modern thought and troubles their seeming obviousness. I leave thinking about

³⁰ These debates are also largely left out of the Gallery’s accompanying volume of essays. See Sloan and Burnett 2003, eds. A particularly esoteric and engaging narrative of one such cluster of debates is that around the creation of universal scientific languages in the seventeenth century – the debates that pre-dated the neat orders and labels marking the butterflies and mollusks in the Enlightenment Gallery’s “The Natural World” section. See Slaughter 1982.

Foucault's reflections on the boundaries of ways of knowing, the shifts when what he calls "the stark impossibility of thinking *that*" (2002, xvi) becomes something else. How do the colonial classifications and narratives imposed on these objects limit what we moderns can think and do? Do the many layers of representation in the Enlightenment room signal such a change, or are they, in their simultaneous desire "to recreate the experience of a museum visitor in the early years of the British Museum" resisting the death of that modern subject whose birth they celebrate and are enabled by? How does one *really* think without classifying, think in ways other than through ordering and taking both pride and comfort in that order? Many possible responses have been given to this question, and yet, none seem as simultaneously (and alternatively) violent and comforting as classification.

The ordering of orders

In the Enlightenment room's classification of classifications, it becomes possible to see both the ubiquity of practices of classification and the ways in which this ubiquity is multiplied, refracted and reflected in a much broader field of knowledge practices: from those that most readily come to mind when we think of 'classification' – from living things to languages to cultures – to those where classification practices appear more obliquely – like in the discourses through which we order practices of political dissent. If we should choose to undertake the muddy task of thinking through the modes of knowing related to modern classification, a complex acrobatics of linking mundane modes of order to seemingly mythical investigations into the hidden depths of discourse lies ahead.

Yet, it is not only the reproduction of classification as a mode of representation that makes the Enlightenment Room's classifications noteworthy here. It is also that these

multiplications and reflections, far from being simple reproductions, operate reflexively.

As late modern knowledge creators, we not only classify, we *know* that we classify and can, and do, thus question our systems of classification in various ways. While we question not only empirical knowledge as a mode of improving understanding of our worlds, for us it is also possible to question how the conditions of possibility for empirical knowledge become possible. That is to say, it is possible to consider the ordering of orders. The Enlightenment Room functions as a particularly incisive ordering of orders – a grounding upon which modern practices in their self-questioning meet their representational limits and double over into “Classifying the world,” the space where the visitor can traverse between tables full of butterflies and the museum’s descriptions of the history of classification.

Modern classification, as a kind of ordering practice that also orders other ordering practices, doubles back over itself. While it has become possible to study classification as such, studies of practices of classification remain relatively rare. As Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Star, the authors of one such rare study, note, one consequence is that “we stand for the most part in formal ignorance of the social and moral order created by these invisible, potent entities” (2000, 2-3). While this critical possibility of ordering orders has been available to us, in the history of Euro-American philosophy, since at least the eighteenth century, most of our knowledge practices proceed without such meta-level investigations. Thus, in modernity, it becomes possible to question modes of order as such, and, at the same time, to argue, as Bowker and Star do, that “[t]o classify is human” (2000, 1). Indeed, they can *only* (albeit critically) imagine that to classify is human, as modern classification has increasingly turned to

questions of classifying and ordering the human and its practices – finite, present, corporeal and also historically implicated.

Questions of classification, as modern questions, then also become questions of judgment and discrimination, which are, significantly for this project, *political* questions. As the case of the Enlightenment Room demonstrates, sorting relevant and irrelevant material into appropriate categories becomes a necessary task of making sense of vast quantities of diverse information. On a basic level, discrimination here involves making judgments, decisions about how objects of study are related or not related to each other, and how we can understand them in the context of certain categories of understanding or modes of ordering knowledge. Classification systems – formal or informal – function as limits within which greater understanding is possible. Discrimination in this sense has multiple effects, acting as what the poet William Blake refers to as the “mind-forg’d manacles,” or the classification systems through which the limits of our understandings – and more broadly, our social and political lives – are determined.

These processes of sorting and discriminating also always involve a *politics*, which operates in multiple ways. The conscious or unconscious decisions to order objects of knowledge in one way rather than another often have political purposes or effects. That is to say that the decisions of actors of various kinds have not only often been politically motivated, but have set out both frames and chains of understanding through which subsequent ideas emerge and function. Such knowledge-making practices have broad political effects around what it is possible to say and see in any given historical period. Which is to say that classification practices, as knowledge-making practices, are part of a politics of representation that is deeply rooted in the ways we understand our worlds. Classification practices operate through sets of categories and languages that

form the basis for political discourses of possibility and impossibility. Thus, to speak and to act in intelligible ways usually requires being implicated in long-reaching, historically-specific and politically-coercive orders of thought. Grappling with these questions is perhaps one way in which we might begin to access not only historically-specific modes of classification but also the ordering of orders as modes of delimitation. This is what Foucault describes as the space of archaeological investigation, where “between the already ‘encoded’ eye and reflexive knowledge there is a middle region” (2002, xxii). This middle region is where order itself is ordered, through culturally and historically-specific ordering categories and practices that are both the progenitors of contemporary understandings of classification – for my purposes here, mainly in the social sciences – and completely foreign to them. Further, it is through this foreignness that thinking through the middle region reveals that it is possible to glimpse the limits of our forms of knowledge, and, perhaps, the historicity and delimitation of our political aspirations. Yet, classification has often been taken to be an ontological or metaphysical issue or an epistemological issue.³¹ While this chapter rehearses much of this work, my aim is to demonstrate that the knowledge practices we formalize as classification must also be taken seriously as a political problem.

Before moving into a historical narrative around how specific ways of thinking about a politics around classification emerged in the context of early modern and modern European philosophies and scientific practices, I want to, perhaps ironically, outline what I mean by classification. In a general sense, classification is a method and a practice that provides a response to a question about the production and organization of knowledge.

³¹ See, for instance, Bowker and Star 2000, Slaughter 1982, Porter 1986, Goodman 1978, Douglas and Hull 1992. For studies of the creation of systems of information and knowledge practices that take political effects seriously see, for instance, Hacking 2006a, 2006b, 2002, 1995 and Davidson 2001.

Taken in this way, I employ a broad understanding of classification that links it with a host of other conceptual practices and representational approaches, such as linguistic and philosophical practices of naming and defining, the creation of formal systems and orders, processes of formal and numerical representation, and forms of abstraction and categorization. There is a necessary sense of abstraction here, as both forms and practices of classification are constitutively intended to function generally, *as abstractions*. In this sense, practices of classification are constitutively linked to both practices of representation and specific linguistic practices like naming and defining. Which is to say that I understand classification to be both a form and a practice of organizing, ordering and making sense of things, ideas, people, practices, events and so on based on historically-specific forms and practices of ordering and making sense of things, ideas, people, practices, events and so on. By form, I mean an accepted configuration, shape, structure or order. By practice, I mean the ways in which forms are put to use. Which is all to say that while I am interested in the emergence of very specific ways of classifying, I am also interested in the broad underlying *practices* that circulate around and through the word ‘classification,’ attempting to broaden their reach and universalize their terms.

For Bowker and Star, classification can be described simply as “our spatiotemporal segmentation of the world” where “[a] ‘classification system’ is a set of boxes (metaphorical or literal) into which things can be put to then do some kind of work – bureaucratic or knowledge production” (2000, 10). Understood this way, classifications try to order in a way that is complete and, depending on the practices through which objects are ordered, scientific. It is also, however, possible to think of classifications as functioning less systematically, as practices or as *processes* of deciding and ordering into

existing intelligible categories and understandings, rather than completed systems, as orders, in the way I have described above. Thus, a process of classification might involve something like putting something that seems chaotic into a knowable, *historical* order. As Foucault has argued, practices of classification create and function within systems of possibility, where “what counts as reason, argument, or evidence” is governed by specific rules and “regularities... so that modes of ‘rationality’ are topical and dated” (cited in Hacking 2002, 89).

At the same time, I argue that the historical specificity of contemporary practices of classification must be thought in relation to its particular emergence in seventeenth-century European thought. This makes classification a very narrow (and often highly technical) project, but one with broad consequences, some of which are the subject of this dissertation. One of these consequences is the urge to classify *as* a means of making sense and ordering. Histories of European knowledge practices are one set of various ways of putting things in order. Contemporary classifications are, of course, distinct from the kinds of classification that emerged in and came to dominate the order of seventeenth and eighteenth century European thought. This dominance, during this historical period, however, continues to reverberate in the ways in which we not only tend to dehistoricize our practices of classification, but also to overlook the ways in which the urge to classify is also an urge to flatten and universalize. At least part of the aim in tracing histories and struggles over classification as a form of order is to historicize and locate these practices within a particular socio-political context. As the tour through the Enlightenment Room suggests, the emergence of classification practices enabled assumptions of knowledge and order about the world at large. These knowledges were imagined to be both universally applicable and thus to take priority over those ways of ordering the world not

emerging from European modernity. As such, the modes of European modernity that continue to dominate contemporary thought have also functioned as forms of epistemic violence, enabling colonizing horrors as both a consequence and a condition for their proliferation. I discuss this set of questions briefly in the introduction to this dissertation and in the next section.

European narratives of classification

Historical epistemology and archaeology

To understand often peculiar contemporary attempts to make sense of practices of dissent, it is my contention that it is helpful to situate them in relation to the historical practices of classification emerging from seventeenth and eighteenth century European philosophies of science and language to which, as knowledge creation practices, they are linked. This involves several moves that may be thought of as detours, but which I hope will nonetheless demonstrate, by the end of the chapter, the resonances between histories and philosophies of science and contemporary practices of classification as they relate to practices of dissent. I take Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* (*OT*) as a structuring guide. Foucault is by no means an infallible guide. Foucault's analyses in *OT* have been more broadly criticized as totalizing or universalizing, which he attempts to account for in the English forward to *OT* where he characterizes *OT* as "a strictly 'regional' study" (2002, x). By this, he means that his aim is to examine the fields of work, life and language specifically and comparatively, rather than as a schematic to explain a period as such. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he acknowledges that "[i]n *The Order of Things*, the absence of methodological sign-posting may have given the impression that my analyses were being conducted in terms of cultural totality" (1972a, 18) and notes that this was not his intent, though it was the effect. This apparent 'cultural totality' is most

evident in Foucault's famous definition of an episteme, which, while applicable in the history of knowledge in Western Europe, may not necessarily apply elsewhere (2002, 168). Thus, a crucial caveat to my reliance on Foucault's work here is that the classifications and categories he describes and that I take up in this study are culturally and historically specific.³² They travel and are imposed and transposed beyond the European context in various ways, but my emphasis here is on their significance to the context of practices of dissent primarily in Europe and North America.

Foucault's narrative in *OT* is helpful here because it both opens onto the multiple historical events and concepts necessary to understand what I mean by classification in this dissertation, and also because it points specifically to the paradoxical condition in which contemporary modes of knowledge find themselves as they seek to classify emerging phenomena – the problem of the seeable and the sayable given our modern inheritances. The archaeological approach in this text is thus notable because it is focused not on particular subjects but rather on the linguistic and conceptual structures that define subjects' possible actions. This, as I'll discuss in future chapters, can be crudely summed up as the twin problems of using old categories for new concepts and the forced choice to categorize through which modern knowledge functions.

In rehearsing these historical moments, I am also interested in what Mary Poovey and Ian Hacking, after Lorraine Daston, have called, in different texts, “historical epistemology.” Daston describes historical epistemology as “a history of the categories of facticity, evidence, objectivity, and so forth” (1995, 24). For Poovey, historical epistemology is a helpful approach because it takes seriously the idea that “the categories by which knowledge is organized – not only epistemological units like facts, but also

³² For a reading of this cultural specificity and its effects, see Hindess and Helliwell 1999.

institutionalized units like disciplines or professional societies – inform *what* can be known at any given time, as well as *how* this knowledge can be used” (1995, 7). In this sense, Poovey describes historical epistemology as “a study of determinations and effects” (7). Her approach is focused on specific actions and practices connected to the relationship between ideas and modes of governance. This doubled understanding of historical epistemology – as both conceptual and institutionalized - will be helpful here as a contrast and complement to both Hacking’s and, especially, Foucault’s analyses of orders of knowledge. Hacking is interested in a historical epistemology that examines the memories of “present ideas,” where “a correct analysis of an idea requires an account of its previous trajectory and uses” (2002, 9). Or, rather, because what Hacking is most interested in is a study of “epistemological concepts as objects that evolve and mutate,” he describes his approach as a “historical meta-epistemology” (9).

In the same vein, my own taking up of “historical meta-epistemology” involves not specific modes of making arguments, or the formation of concepts, but rather modes of ordering themselves. That is to say, my project here is to attempt to think together a kind of (meta)historical epistemology (which might be closer to, though distinct from, what Foucault has called genealogy) with the question of a historically specific “experience of order” (2002, xxiii), Foucault’s archaeological move. An archaeology, as discussed above, is concerned not only with the tracing of specific ideas (the concept of the category, the fact, evidence and so on) from their contemporary iterations to their historical mutations, but also in the question of what Foucault calls “systems of simultaneity,” the multiple and identical underlying orders that are the conditions of possibility for the emergence of empirical and conceptual knowledges in any given period. These underlying orders are what Foucault calls “epistemological fields” (xxiv).

In a much more modest way, then, I proceed here by taking the Foucault of *OT* as my exemplar of a figure whose work takes up both the kind of broad archaeological themes and narrow historical epistemological themes, what I am here grouping under the category of classification. The specifically historical aspects of this work are thus necessarily limited – that is to say, this is not a rigorous historical study. It is instead based on a series of connections in early modern and modern European philosophies of science from which I will follow Foucault and others in suggesting that contemporary practices of classification are discontinuously descended. Most importantly for the argument to come, thinking through the question of archaeology through what Foucault calls epistemic links opens onto the relationship between classification practices and questions of the possible, the seeable and the sayable in any given period of time.

Having outlined something of the methodological inspirations through which I read questions of classification, I now turn to an episodic overview of key epistemological turns in the understanding of what I am here calling classification that briefly comments on Aristotelian, Renaissance and early modern understandings, before devoting the majority of this section to a discussion of Foucault's reading of the modern episteme in *OT* as a paradigmatic instance of the problem this dissertation seeks to outline. In rehearsing the orders relevant to these historical periods, more or less corresponding to the three periods Foucault examines in *OT*, I focus most specifically on the questions of representation, limits and orders. I'm thinking through classification in the context of questions of representation, limits, and orders because, first, these have longstanding historical co-implications and, second, because each of these problems is not only an ontological or epistemological issue, but also a political issue. Which is not to say that I am specifically interested in the ways classifications are constructed and put to

use for political aims (or, at least, this is not one of my primary aims), but rather that the forces through which practices of classification function may not be linked to specific political actors, but nonetheless have political effects.³³ In the introduction to *OT*, Foucault suggests that he is interested in revealing “a positive unconscious of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse, instead of disputing its validity and seeking to diminish its scientific nature” (2002, xi-xii). In this vein, I hope to trace the question of our unawareness of the epistemic limits of our thought and their modes of action. In a 1977 interview published under the title “Truth and Power,” Foucault describes this question as “the politics of the scientific statement,” noting that what he is interested in is:

not a change of content (refutation of old errors, recovery of old truths), nor... a change of theoretical form (renewal of paradigm, modification of systematic ensembles). It is a question of what *governs* statements, and the way in which they *govern* each other so as to constitute a set of propositions which are scientifically acceptable, and hence capable of being verified or falsified by scientific procedures. In short, there is a problem of the regime, the politics of the scientific statement (1984, 54-5).

This can, in some ways, be described as what Foucault calls the question of power, but here I hope to make this link more closely to the experience of order, which Foucault did not directly make, though he did later allude to it. In the same interview as that cited above, Foucault notes that he asks himself about why he didn’t talk about power directly in the archaeologies, when “what else was it that I was talking about... but power?” (1984, 57).³⁴ I want to infer, then, that the archaeologies perform critical work and that this work is, in this sense, political. Thus, I undertake a historical epistemological tracing

³³ For example of the constructions of classifications for explicitly political uses, especially vis-à-vis questions of race, identity, and coloniality, see Aly and Roth 2004, Appadurai 1996, Caplan and Torpey 2001, Cohn 1996, Gould 2006, Peabody 2001, Stoler 2002, Taschereau Mamers 2017.

³⁴ As Gutting points out, however, by 1983, Foucault notes that “it is not power, but the subject, which is the general theme of my research”(qtd. in Gutting 2005, 4).

of ideas as a means to examine the persistence of the political effects of practices of classification, the depth of their presence (and simultaneous concealment) in political orders, and their shifting understandings in the history of Anglo-European thought.

The Aristotelians and the Nominalists

Debates about classification have been part of Western epistemology at least since the emergence of questions around abstraction in the shift from oral to written language to which Plato's *Republic* and several of the dialogues are a response.³⁵ It is, however, Aristotle who is more influential to early modern thought. Aristotle's materialist *Categories* and the classificatory systems he creates in it are in turn a response to Plato's abstract idealisms, and underlie much early modern and modern thinking about classification. Classification, for Aristotle, is a response to the problem of certainty in knowledge he finds in Platonist idealism. While Plato reasoned that the Forms, Plato's own mode of ensuring permanence and certainty, *must* exist, he also reasoned that they must exist outside of nature, outside from the specific things that are their images or reflections. This, for Aristotle, was unacceptable, as knowledge of the Forms cannot be certain if it cannot be demonstrated through the world of appearances (Slaughter 1982, 20). The solution to this problem, then, becomes "to consider the essences as existing simultaneous to and in connection with, as part of, the visible world" (20). The essences are determined through form – which is what "persists through and causes substantial change" in matter – as it takes shape in matter (16). The essences are the necessary or permanent aspects of things, what distinguishes a thing from all others, and is found and demonstrated only in "the common nature or behaviour of things" (17). The essences are thus understood as universals, rather than particulars – we learn about them through the

³⁵ On abstraction in Plato, see Eric Havelock, *Preface to Plato*.

substance of things as it exists in the visible world. As Slaughter points out, “[t]his concept of essence is still with us in daily language as, for example, when we speak of ‘the nature of things’... or of things being ‘essentially’ such and such” (17). This question of the essence is one aspect of the significance of Aristotelian classification for my project – the essence persists in questions of what events are *really* about, and the drive to classify them through a basic, necessary characteristic.

The universals too are materially real for Aristotle, as out there for us to discover in name and form (21). For Aristotle, certain knowledge could only be located in universals, and not in observed particulars, especially not as observed by singular individuals. To arrive at the specificity of these essences, Aristotelian classification works through “binary characteristics that the object being classified either presents or does not present” (62). Aristotle’s categorization scheme is familiar, beginning from a listing of most inclusive general categories and narrowing down to more and more specific definitions, enabling the possibility of a classification of all that there is. Aristotle’s scientific order begins with “the assumption of the existence of essences” in the world and ends with the formulation of definitions, with a practice of classification between these two points (Slaughter 1982, 26). For Aristotle, both philosophy and science need to demonstratively show the truth of general principles to reach their aim of arriving at certain knowledge. Thus, Aristotle formulates the universal laws and categories which are perennial and unchanging principles. His essentialism offers certain knowledge in the world, through categories which represent *real* aspects of things in the world – this is why early modern Aristotelians would call themselves ‘realists.’

Aristotelian thought dominated European natural philosophy through the 17th century when Aristotelian essentialism began to be seriously challenged by nominalist

forms of classification. An aspect of this debate around classification in 17th century Europe has been articulated by M.M. Slaughter in *Universal languages and scientific taxonomy in the seventeenth century*. Slaughter details the 17th century shift through which we see “the development of classification as a science, due to an inadequacy of the available language to represent scientific discoveries. The universal languages project, which received support from the likes of Isaac Newton, Renee Descartes and the Royal Society, aimed to replace Latin with an artificially created language that could classify all things. This project, as Slaughter notes, sought “the ordering of everyday life raised to the conscious level of theory as a deliberate attempt to deal with the multiplicity of knowledge” (1982, 217). Slaughter traces the conceptual and political struggles between the Aristotelian realists and nominalists, where the reality of Aristotle’s universal categories began to be challenged. On the cusp between these debates are the discussions of taxonomy through the development of universal scientific languages that form the basis for Slaughter’s study. For Slaughter, the universal language projects were a response to the inadequacy of language in dealing with socio-cultural events – the proliferation of new information emerging from scientific discoveries, the exploration and colonization of the Americas, and the growth in literacy (1982, ii). The universal language projects, like most of the specific examples I’ll mention in this historical section, exemplify formal responses to particular problems of knowledge or understanding. I am interested in such formal responses to questions of change, and the concurrent inability of existing concepts to capture emerging and changing worlds. This situation – of the inability of concepts, of language, to capture novelty or change – is itself representative of a recurrent formal problem that has re-emerged at various historical junctures. In each such period, as will become evident, there is a conflict

around which particular forms of understanding will prevail as norms. Yet, while these conflicts are fought over by specific figures, whether they are fought as *formal problems* is less clear. That is to say, the specific contents of these debates – for example, between realists and nominalists – inform shifts in the formal orders through which we understand order itself, whether or not this is the intent of individuals involved in these specific debates. This is the archaeological move, where “it is not the surface patterns but the fundamental presuppositions of thought” that are in question (Hutchings 1996, 109).

The universal languages, like the classifications in the British Museum’s Enlightenment Room, were a coping strategy to manage one such “complex novelty” in the mid-17th century: to gain control over vast amounts of information. At the same time, the universal languages debates exemplify the emergence of key new forms of order that Foucault describes as the Classical episteme and Slaughter describes as the taxonomic episteme (the period from the mid-17th century to the late 18th century). New forms of order like the universal language system, but also the emergence of probability, and new forms of analysis make possible “a single network of necessities” based on a specific relation *to* order (Foucault 2002, 70) and a shift in the prevalent order of knowledge.³⁶

Classification, Foucault argues, is the episteme of the 17th century. It makes possible the total ordering of Classical knowledge. In the case of natural history, in order to deal with the newly discovered complexity of biological objects, it is necessary to create a taxonomy, “a system of signs” through which to classify (Foucault 2002, 79-80). Taxonomic structures enable a combination of conceptual and linguistic representation – they create categories through which to imagine relations of identity and difference in the form of linguistic names (Slaughter 1982, 66). Classifications thus both enable putting

³⁶ On another such new form, see Hacking, 2006b.

chaos into order and, at the same time, define the things so ordered (144). This form of order, combined with processes of measurement, is what Foucault refers to as *mathesis*, “the general science of order” through which non-mathematical fields, like the Classical proto-human sciences of life, language, and wealth Foucault is concerned with in *OT*, begin to be organized (2002, 63). These approaches require classification for knowledge, and further, numerical representation, as I will discuss below. *Mathesis* functions in tandem with the taxonomic system of signs to enable a universal method – a system of analysis through which the empirical fields of life, language and wealth can examine their objects. This method is also the limit of classical knowledge – the system of signs “that span[s] the whole domain of empirical representation, but never extend[s] beyond it” (Foucault 2002, 81). This is the classification table. The questions of the thinkable and the representable are built into the representation table as, simultaneously, its possibility (as representable) and its limits (as finite, but expandable to infinity).

While *mathesis* and the classification table form critical aspects of the universal method of the Classical episteme, classification work is also always linguistic. In addition to the “taxonomic structure” of any taxonomy, there is also a nomenclature that represents the taxonomic structure (Slaughter 1982, 63). Indeed, in the classical era, Foucault argues, language is *primarily* a form of representation (2002, 87). Classification in this period is co-constituted by specific forms of criticism which function both as a critique of the impossibility of existing language to “construct... a science or a philosophy,” and the need to build “a perfectly analytic language” with which to define the relation of language to what it represents. In this way, Classical language, in enabling classification, also enables its own authority, and the possibility of its universalism – the possibility of a knowable world. As Foucault notes,

[i]n so far as language can represent all representations it is with good reason the element of the universal. There must exist within it, between its words, the totality of the world, and inversely, the world, as the totality of what is representable, must be able to become, in its totality, an Encyclopaedia (2002, 94).

As the basis for representing order, language authorizes itself as ordering. Classical language thus becomes authoritative in the world that it simultaneously creates and describes. It is created to describe a world and as such it is the authority in this world. As I will discuss in more detail below and in Chapter 5, thinking about language in this way opens up questions around how we might think about language in relation to questions about authority and – significantly – dissent. What is particularly notable about the Classical era's nominalist classification system is the way in which universalization is its explicit aim.

Linguistic representation is “an *analysis* of thought: not a simple patterning, but a profound establishment of order in space” (Foucault 2002, 91). Given these Classical imperatives of order, the significance of the name, and the rise of nominalism contra essentialism becomes evident. The name is the figure through which language represents and performatively enacts. This is not, of course, limited to the Classical episteme. Language has always named, but in the Classical age the name becomes specifically elevated as the marker of taxonomic knowledge and the possibility of universal knowledge. It becomes clear, then, how the rise of nominalism is also the fall of essentialist relations between words and things. Slaughter argues that the rise of nominalism also signals the end of the purely taxonomic system of the universal languages that form the boundary between essentialism and nominalism, where the categories are still closely connected to the essences. Part of this, Slaughter suggests, has to do with developments in science that challenged Aristotelian physics – the existence of

atoms puts both observational science and the possibility of achieving certainty into question (1982, 190). For Aristotle, the name and the thing are the same, and the essence is a *visible* aspect of the thing (contra Plato's invisible forms). The possibility of *invisible* things both puts into question the relation between word and thing and necessitates the name to make the thing visible.

Yet, as Foucault notes, many of the ordering principles associated with the taxonomies (and indeed the taxonomies themselves) persist with the triumph of nominalism over essentialism. Even though nominalist thought dispels the idea that there is a *necessary* relation between "words and things, nature and language" (Slaughter 1982, 194), the order of classification continues to structure Classical thought. With nominalism, however, the name ascends as a mode of representation that organizes all Classical discourse. There is no *necessary* connection, but names still function to name the being of things, and to do this in the form of a scientific representation, through taxonomy and well-ordered nomenclature systems (Foucault 2002, 132). This framework will then enable the emergence of the empirical sciences as such, as Foucault explains:

Here, we can underscore the authority of the name, where to speak or to write is not to say things or to express oneself, it is not a matter of playing with language, it is to make one's way towards the sovereign act of nomination to move towards the place where things and words are conjoined in their common essence, and which makes it possible to give them a name. But once that name has been spoken, all the language that has led up to it, or that has been crossed in order to reach it, is reabsorbed into it and disappears (129).

So modes of naming, of classification, become timeless, ahistorical, and the maneuvers through which the name came to classify vanishes from discourse. These are the essential moves through which both systems like that of Hobbes' sovereign and Bacon's scientific language proceed. Thus, rather than the beginning of discourse, where names are

necessary for expression, Foucault argues that in the Classical age, “[t]he name is the *end* of discourse” (130). In other words, the name is the *limit* of discourse.

Another way to view the re-positioning of the universal languages is through the location of natural history in the Classical episteme. Natural history, a precursor of contemporary biology, of which the seventeenth century universal languages are a part, appears in anticipation of the possibility of naming – the questions of the visible and sayable come together into the name, as something that could not be sayable “if things and words, distinct from one another, did not, from the very first, communicate in a representation” (142). Thus, Foucault concludes, “[n]atural history is nothing more than the nomination of the visible” where sight is the privileged means of analysis (144). This “nomination of the visible” takes place in part through a structure – a table of classification – where “[b]y limiting and filtering the visible, structure enables it to be transcribed into language. It permits the visibility of the animal or plant to pass over its entirety into the discourse that receives it” (147). The relation between natural history and language is thus not about one being transposed on the other, but rather about both working through a particular “arrangement of knowledge, which orders the knowledge of beings so as to make it possible to represent them in a system of names” (172). The structural orders through which natural history and language function, then, through the mode of nomination, *creates* the world of not only the sayable and visible, but the world of the describable. In this way, again, the Classical episteme functions within its own limits of representation.

Yet, it is important to note that these order-creating enterprises are multi-dimensional. That is to say, their scientificity is also informed by agents and structures as well as social, political, and, significantly, *stylistic* and *rhetorical* imperatives.

Epistemological imperatives, in this sense, involve particular rhetorical and stylistic choices and priorities. In *The History of the Modern Fact*, Mary Poovey not only examines the ways in which shifts in scientific understandings in early modern Britain affected the ordering of knowledge systems, but also the ways in which specific actors employed stylistic tactics to further their own social and political aims. The cases of Bacon and Hobbes and the experimentations of the seventeenth century Royal Society members offer two such examples of the ways in which rhetorical imperatives are crucial to authorizing particular forms of knowledge.

Bacon's distinction between ancient and modern facts is, Poovey argues, not merely scientific, but also political. In the aim to distinguish between the unadulterated, scientifically observed particulars that are to form the basis for what Poovey calls modern facts and Aristotle's commonplace universals, Bacon makes a *rhetorical* distinction. As Poovey puts it, "Bacon insisted that the 'errors, vagaries, and prodigies' of nature were immune from the theoretical assumptions that obviously informed the ancient commonplaces *because he wanted to clear a space for new knowledge and to silence academic dissent*" (Poovey 1998, 10, emphasis in original). Since Bacon was located in the debates between nominalists and essentialists, his aim was to distinguish between his own methods and theirs. His aim is to simplify language, to elevate plain language as more appropriate to cataloguing observed facts than ornamented, figurative language. As Poovey points out, however, Bacon did this through a question of *style* rather than substance – Bacon's own "plain style," rejecting the ornamented language of the day as a means of authorizing the experimental method as the basis for fact collection was itself a rhetorical move. Poovey also suggests that these aims had a political motivation – to strengthen the Tudor monarchy. In this way, Bacon posited his new form of knowledge

as a reason of state. Thus, Poovey notes, Bacon's "famous aphorism 'knowledge is power' should be understood in this context: as a statement about the instrumental value that a certain kind of knowledge could have for a specific form of power" (98).³⁷ Indeed, in Bacon's England, knowledge in the service of the state entailed the kind of knowledge that could put to rest "religious, political and epistemological controversies while permitting imperial expansion" (102).

Hobbes followed Bacon through an aim to produce *certain* knowledge in the aftermath of the English revolution. He contended that, contrary to Bacon's experiments, which could produce only "probable" knowledge, mathematics could produce "certain" knowledge (104). In the context of political order, Hobbes aimed to create certainty through a kind of logical reason, which he felt was closest to the mathematical demonstration through which *certain* knowledge was possible. With Hobbes, philosophy becomes a kind of arithmetic. What Hobbes calls "reckoning" is the addition or subtraction of ideas from a sum. For instance:

When a man *Reasoneth*, he does nothing else but conceive a summe total, from *Addition* of parcels; or conceive a Remainder, from *Substraction* of one summer from another: which (if it be done by Words,) is conceiving of the consequences from the names of all the parts, to the name of the whole; or from the names of the whole and one part, to the name of the other part... These operations are not incident to Numbers onely, but to all manner of things that cane be added together, and taken one out of another... The Logicians teach the same in *Consequences of words*; adding together *two names*, to make an *Affirmation*; and *two Affirmations*, to make a *Demonstration*; and from the *summe*, or *Conclusion* of a *Syllogism*, they subtract one *Proposition*, to find the other. Writers of *Politiques*, adde together *Pactions*, to find mens *duties*; and Lawyers, *Lawes*, and *facts*, to find what is *right* and *wrong* in the actions of private men. In summe, in what matter soever there is place for *addition* and

³⁷ In this sense, Bacon's project is the inverse of Kant's (later) project to 'Sapere aude' (even though Kant, too, had a strong imperative to obey in his thought), and very similar to Hobbes': "the aim of Bacon's enterprise was clear and explicitly revolutionary: he wanted to completely restart 'the whole operation of the mind... so that from the very beginning it is not left to itself, but is always subject to rule' (*Novum Organum*, 38)" (Poovey 1998, 98). Yet, with the impending English Revolution, Bacon's knowledge project in the service to the king seemed less obvious (who defines the reason of state?).

subtraction, there also is place for *Reason*; and where these have not place, there *Reason* has nothing at all to do (Hobbes 1996, 31-2, qtd. in Poovey 1998, 104-5).

Yet, despite his conviction about the power of mathematical reason to achieve certain knowledge, Hobbes also knew that after the revolution, “appeals to reason had to be supplemented by an appeal to the passions,” which he did through rhetoric and figurative language (Poovey 1998, 105), a move that went mostly unnoticed by his readers due to his own rhetorical skill. Poovey thus positions Hobbes as an early social scientist, for whom quantification and logical argument also function as an interpretation: “by translating incommensurate differences or qualities into something that can be quantified, Hobbes renders social relations amenable to arithmetic” (108). In this way, Hobbes’ method creates its effect – the mathematical approach creates certainty.³⁸

Finally, it is important to note that there is also significant question of *belief* that underpinned both natural philosophers and political philosophers’ thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and undermined the claim to disinterestedness that numerical representation was supposed to guarantee. On the one hand, many claims around natural orders rested on a kind of providentialism; on the other, they rested on the specific desires and orientations of those making them (for instance, Bacon’s desire to quell political dissent and uphold the Tudor monarchy; Hobbes’ for a clear sovereign order). Thus while seventeenth century goals towards the making of a scientific order of

³⁸ The scientists of the seventeenth century Royal Society, while in many ways in conflict with philosophers like Hobbes, are also concerned with the aim of a clear and scientific linguistic order through which a scientific order can be represented. Poovey describes the Royal Society’s “decision to sidestep both theological and political questions in favor of a new kind of knowledge that theorized and depended on the modern fact” (93). For Robert Boyle, this disinterestedness was to be achieved through the use of precise instruments, as means to delineate the specific position and definition of the modern fact – what Poovey calls “nuggets of experience” which are “detached from theory,” but can form the basis for general knowledge (1998, 8). Poovey adds that this was done with a specific aim – to separate facts from both theory and method “in order to decrease the likelihood of civil dispute.” This was a social system of civility, of which the members of the Royal Society were a part. They thus based the facticity of their systems of order on their own position as trustworthy gentlemen. Further, see Shapin and Schaffer (1985).

knowledge – through the universal languages, systems of classification, logics of political reasoning and so on – were oriented through a desire for certainty and replicability, it is also important to note that they were oriented by the specific historical circumstances in which they emerged – by the political aims of specific figures and the rhetorical devices which served to ensure certain knowledge as much as the numerical and logical argumentations that were foregrounded. Both order-making orientations are significant to a discussion of the relationship between classification and dissent, I want to suggest. At the same time, it is worth underscoring that a discussion of stylistic influences and political motivations here is not intended as an argument for subjective agency in the emergence of epistemological order. Rather, it is a discussion of the effects of the formal orders through which we understand any particular order of knowledge itself. The question of order as bound up with limits created through classification, representation, and desire for scientific certainty, but at the same time bound up with particular political concerns of the age. The archaeological question of the ordering of orders, I follow Foucault in suggesting, is the basis upon which all of this rests. The figures discussed in this section are interested in overturning essentialism by *actively* creating a scientific order, which meets their own political imperatives, recognizing that the current system cannot/will not stand. They are working an epistemological field that itself, Foucault argues, limits the seeable and the sayable, despite and through the specific political imperatives that individuals are working through and toward.

Modernity and the Question of Man

Changing orders, changing subjects

The late 18th century, the time of European Enlightenment, marks what Foucault calls the entry into the modern episteme, a shift in our experience of order, from an order based on representation and classification, to an order based on the emergence of a figure who is both the subject and object of order-making practices – man.³⁹ The figure of man is the being who understands representation (Gutting 1989, 198). Man is both produced by and produces the world. In modernity, contra the Classical period described above, representation loses “the power to provide a foundation” (Foucault 2002, 259). There is thus, now, a separation between words and things in the modern mode of representation – things have their own structures and temporality, and representation itself becomes historical,

a purely temporal succession, in which these things address themselves to a subjectivity, a consciousness, a singular effort of cognition, to the ‘psychological’ individual who from the depth of his own history, or on the basis of the tradition handed on to him, is trying to know... The very being of that which is represented is now going to fall outside representation itself (260).

That is to say that, a subject or an object gains its identity not due to its place in the system of classification, but because of its historical location (1989, 181). Order becomes linked to history and time. Man is inserted as the figure who represents in the new order of representation in modernity. This simultaneous subject and object poses a profound challenge to Classical forms of representation, “a mutation in the forms of representation” (Foucault 2002, 224). The British Museum Enlightenment Room’s classification of classifications hones in on this historical moment when it is no longer

³⁹ There is a vast and varied literature that seeks to diagnose and explain the historical, social, political, philosophical, and, particularly relevant for this study, epistemological significance of the European Enlightenment period. See, for instance, Cassirer 2009, Dupre 2005, Edelstein 2010, Gay 1969, Hulme and Jordanova 1990, Kosseleck 2000 and Schmidt 1996. For a succinct reading, see Venn 2006.

sufficient to ground knowledge-seeking practices in the classifications themselves as systems of knowledge – where the representation or definition *is* identical to the thing. In this sense, the Enlightenment marks a moment when relation between words and things shifts and becomes reflexive. Thinking about classification *as such* is indicative of the possibility of thinking about “the relation of representation to that which is posited in it” (Foucault 2002, 259) – the space between the representation and that which is represented. “Man” is a figure who both represents and is represented – this is a reflexive shift. Hacking describes this reflexivity as arriving with Kant’s “transcendental unity of apperception” where “[e]very one of my noticing of anything is accompanied by a noticing that I notice it” (2002, 14).

While for Classical thinkers, classifications represented all that could be seen and expanded to infinity, thinkers of the Enlightenment and after (arguably, to the present), are interested in the hidden and invisible relations that are represented.⁴⁰ For modern thinkers, there is always a question of the doubled, the hidden, which, paradoxically, plays out as a series of delimitations that emerge with the emergence of man as a finite, historical being. Thus, modern philosophical questions orient themselves around formalizing and interpreting hidden relations: the relation between logic and ontology, which is a relation between formalization and encounter, and the relation between signification and time, which is an interpretive relation. These reflexive structural questions represent, for Foucault, “the awakened and troubled consciousness of modern thought” (226). They are oriented around the demotion of language as a timeless, universal form of order through the emergence of “profound historicity” that “penetrates

⁴⁰ The Enlightenment, it is important to note, should not be thought interchangeably with modernity; it is, itself, a frontier of modernity. In this sense, then, we might think of Foucault’s location (as he urges in “What is Enlightenment?”) as a kind of frontier of modernity as well (though I might suggest that this work on frontiers is a particularly modern move inaugurated through the Enlightenment).

into the heart of things” (xxv). These epistemological conditions in turn enable both the shift to what Foucault calls the empirical sciences (biology, linguistics, and political economy) and the appearance of the human sciences (for Foucault ethnology, psychology, philology), which rely upon the emergence of man as their simultaneous subject and object. Modern classification practices, as implicated in the methods of the empirical and the human sciences, then, become a question of how we seek to represent *ourselves*. While remnants of Classical representation endure, modernity indicates representation as a problem through the historical, finite figure of man. As I finish working through the historical-epistemological issues that underpin contemporary questions of classification, the key question I hope this section will address, in setting up both the remainder of this chapter and the remaining chapters of the dissertation, is: how does the emergence of contemporary understandings and functionings of classification operate as both a function of the modern episteme’s relation to the figure of man as subject and object of knowledge, and, as a consequence of this, inhibit its own epistemological, political, ontological possibility? Which is all to say that I seek to trace the problem that makes contemporary classification so difficult.

The limits of man, the limits of modernity

If classification is a question of order, it is also a question of limits. In this section, I describe the limits of modern thought, as contained in episteme defining the figure of man. In the Classical episteme, these limits are visually represented by the classification table, or the taxonomy. This question of representation is significantly troubled by the emergence of the figure of man as reflexive subject and object, “an object of possible knowledge ... and at the same time as the being through which all knowledge is possible” (qtd. in Han 2010, 124). The emergence of modern reflexivity is often

associated with Kantian critique as the threshold of modernity, which questions representation on the basis of its limits. That is to say, in modernity it becomes possible to question representation *as* representation (Foucault 2002, 263). In this way, critique posits another metaphysics, which is crucial for the possibility of thinking about classification *as* classification. For Foucault, this has two major effects. On the one hand, from the above description of the questioning of representation as such, the second order repetition, or doubling over of modern thought, becomes apparent. Rather than the linking together of identities and differences through the establishment of specific concepts that had defined Classical order, Foucault argues that the modern episteme is defined by the critical question through the concept of judgment. It is man's critical ability to determine the relationships between representations that enables questioning representation *as such*, rather than the nominal articulation of representation as knowledge itself in the classification table (2002, 177). This renewed understanding of representation is possible through the emergence of man as both subject and object of representation. On the other hand, this reflexive, doubled understanding of representation, through the figure of man, reveals the constitutively unstable features in the formal understanding of man. Significantly, the appearance of an understanding of the instability of the figure of man as such, signifies, Foucault argues, the death of man, and the impending end of the modern episteme. This formal instability, which is simultaneously a recursive, closed system, is the structure with which classifications of dissent are bound up. It is the basis for my argument that claims to novelty, novel subjectivity and novel relations of and to authority do not sufficiently take into account the politics of classification with which modern forms of knowledge are bound up.

Before I begin the examination of the way modern systems of order function – and malfunction – through the figure of man, it is important to note the relation, even in this abstract formulation, between what I am referring to here as orders of knowledge and practices of classification, and practices of dissent. While, significantly, Enlightenment orders of knowledge, in responding to and overturning Classical understandings of order, are themselves a formal means of dissent, the discussion to follow highlights the tension within Kant's critical philosophy as a key basis for modern thought.⁴¹ Critique is always already undermining itself: it is based on both a delimitation of reason (the question of finitude) and a basic assumption that it is through critical reasoning that this limitation can be overcome (Hutchings 1996, 1). This is not only, however, a tension within Kant's critiques. It translates as well to his more explicitly political writings, where Kant links the question of freedom to a question of expanding knowledge that is always foregrounded by caveats of delimitation.⁴² Within this tension, then, it is possible to see one way in which understandings and practices of dissent and practices of classification are closely intertwined in the order of modern knowledge.

Foucault locates the shift to the modern episteme – and the figure of man – in Kantian critical philosophy. Kantian critical philosophy questions “the foundation, the limits, the root of representation” (Foucault 2002, 261) through a rethinking of both the metaphysical bases for knowledge and access to it on the basis of one’s critical capacity as a reasoning subject. Kant’s interest is in demonstrating how we fundamentally

⁴¹ By contrast, I have so far highlighted the social and political influences of nominalist and Classical thinkers (Bacon and Hobbes). It is important to note, then, that the philosophical thought discussed below is not only *formally* a means of dissent to earlier forms of understanding, but also responding to the social and political conditions of the times in which Enlightenment thinkers worked. While a discussion of these is beyond the scope of this text, it is nonetheless worth noting that thinkers like Kant and Rousseau also responded to the political circumstances of their day, including the French and American Revolutions, processes of colonization, and scientific innovations.

⁴² See Kant 1991. For analyses that read the critiques together with Kant’s political writings, see, for instance, Arendt 1994, Franke 2001, Hutchings 1996, Molloy 2017, Shapiro 1999, Walker 2010 and 1992.

understand the world around us – how we know (Hutchings 1996, 14). This is a question of the perception of the reasoning subject where our ability to perceive the world around us is grounded in the fact that our thought is finite. It is thus the case that our ability to experience the world around us, what Kant calls “unity of apperception,” is the basis for all coherent thought (15). In this way, Kant posits both the possibility and the limitation – in the form of finitude – of knowledge. Yet, for Kant, as Beatrice Han has noted (2010, 124), there is a distinction between our ability to experience the world around us, and our self-apprehension as grounded in a transcendental sense of self, which is the problematique of the figure of man, and which I will discuss in more detail below.

Both the possibility and limitation of knowledge are possible through a practice of critique. In this way, critique is both generative and responsive or limiting. As Hutchings puts it, “reason is limited (in the sense that it cannot know things as they are in themselves) but that metaphysical science is still possible (in the sense that reason can become aware of the nature of its limits)” (1996, 14). This doubled movement in the construction of epistemological order is what, Foucault argues, “marks the threshold of our modernity” (2002, 263). What can be known, and by extension, what can be represented and how, is understood on the basis of its limits, rather than the means through which it is represented. In this way, Kantian critique questions the basis of representation as such. While Kant seeks to describe the way representations are related to each other, he does this on the basis of seeking to understand the condition of possibility of representation as such. That is to say,

[i]nstead of basing the connection between representations on a foundation arrived at by a sort of internal hollowing-out process, which gradually whittles it away until there is nothing left but the pure impression, he establishes it on the conditions that define its universally valid form (Foucault 2002, 262).

This simultaneously empirical and conceptual approach offers an opening to the problem of the relation between the transcendental and the empirical orders Kant spells out – the way in which empirical experience is connected to the transcendental foundation of knowledge. Here, Foucault notes, “the pure order of the formal is set aside as non-pertinent to any account in which all experience, even that of the pure forms of thought, has its foundations” (2002, 269). The question of modern knowledge, and, importantly for my purposes, the order of modern knowledge, becomes thought of through Kant’s aporetic relation between knowledge, finitude, and subjectivity. For Kant, knowledge is finite and we moderns can only know *because* knowledge is finite; so we are not only aware of the possibility of knowing, but also that this possibility has (we think) transcendable limits.

Finitude is thus the condition of possibility and the limit of man: man’s finitude provides its own foundation. The forms (and the empirical sciences that Foucault describes in *OT*) of life, labour and language through which man experiences his finitude are also our conditions for knowing and understanding this finitude. Indeed, the figure of man, as the form of the modern episteme is only possible through this “configuration of finitude” (Foucault 2002, 346). As Han puts it, “[m]an can only know the world, and himself, from his point of view as a living, working and talking being” (2005, 187).

Put another way, the analytic of finitude provides the foundation for a metaphysics through which the empirical sciences can demonstrate to man both that he is not infinite and that positive knowledge is possible (2002, 341-3). This finitude is internal to man and the empirical sciences – we *know* we are finite just as we know our bodies’ physiological qualities or the grammar of French. This doubled move – finitude as both possibility and limit – means that we are stuck in a recursion of the means through which

we know what we know. This is because the question of finitude does not appear from the transcendental realm, but rather from the empirical contents of modern knowledge – man's knowledge is finite, Foucault argues, “because he is trapped, without possibility of liberation, within the positive contents of language, labour, and life; and inversely, if life, labour, and language may be posited in their positivity, it is because knowledge has finite forms” (2002, 345). For Foucault, it is with the Cartesian cogito that the possibility of modern subjectivity emerges. Descartes' philosophy, Foucault argues, indicates “the first triumph of philosophy as epistemology,” where, for the first time, knowledge is guaranteed as a universal for all individuals. The mind can observe and grasp everything, and the knowing subject is “transparent to itself” (Han 2005, 197). Yet, it is precisely this transparency that Kant will trouble by locating the limits of knowledge within the subject himself, “the very thing that makes knowledge possible” (197). Kant posits both the possibility and the limitation – in the form of finitude – of knowledge. Both the possibility and limitation of knowledge are possible through a practice of critique. The inability of modern philosophy, from Kant onward, to think together the figure of man as both foundational to understanding and an object of understanding himself, is the source of the trap of the analytic of finitude (Gutting 2005, 12). These relations define what Foucault calls “man's mode of being” in the modern episteme. This question of “man's mode of being,” again, is the foundation through which modern philosophy has sought to find the possibility of knowledge (Foucault 2002, 365).

The death of man and the future of knowledge

What Foucault calls the question of “Man and his Doubles” is the constituent aporia in the ‘being’ of man as subject and object of modern knowledge. The doubles are aporias in the *form* of the figure of man as the condition of possibility for modern

knowledge, and also its limit. Much like man's critical reason is always already both enabled *and* undermined through the limits of critique outlined above, Foucault outlines man's position as "empirical-transcendental doublet," his ambiguous relation to a returning and retreating origin, and his destabilized relation to the *cogito* and the question of the unknown as both enabling and notably destabilizing the position of man as subject and object of modern order. This struggle between desires for epistemological certainty in modern knowledge and practices of critique is analogous to what I will describe in subsequent sections of this project as the struggle between classification and dissent.

Foucault's articulation of man as empirical-transcendental doublet perhaps most clearly demonstrates this aporetic structure in the 'being' of man. Contra much thought on modern knowledge, Foucault argues that the emergence of modern knowledge is not based on "objective methods to the study of man, but rather by the constitution of an empirico-transcendental doublet which was called man" (2002, 347). This is despite the proposition that modern empiricities purport to work entirely at the level of empirical objects. Rather, Foucault suggests, they "presuppose epistemic distinctions that seem to require a reference to man as an irreducibly transcendental subject" (Gutting 1989, 201). This empirical-transcendental doubling is apparent in multiple forms. For example, Foucault suggests that modern thought involves discourse on the order of either a reduction (which functions as positivism) or a promise (which takes the order of eschatology) – a reduction of the empirical truth in biological and historical knowledge, and our philosophical reflections about that kind of knowledge. This is the empirical-transcendental doublet, where, Foucault argues, reduction to either is impossible. Another example of the functioning of this doublet is through the transcendental aesthetic (which is bodily, finite, present) and the transcendental dialectic (which functions through

historical relations) where the transcendental dialectic – the fitting over empirical knowledge a history of knowledge – presupposes a kind of critique (Foucault 2002, 348).

The figure of man as empirical-transcendental doublet emerges where the previously delineated empirical and transcendental orders become obscured in Kant's *Anthropology*. As Han explains,

in the *Anthropology*, the idea of a passage from the “*a priori* of knowledge” to an “*a priori* of experience” fuses the two elements carefully distinguished by the *Critique*: The conditions of possibility of experience (the transcendental organization of subjectivity) are referred back to the empirical existence of the subject, which in turn invalidates the very possibility of a pure transcendental determination. By placing the transcendental subject itself (and not only the empirical ego) within the chronology of empirical objects, the *Anthropology* reveals transcendental determination as somehow preexisting itself in a past ... Thus the transcendental subject experiences itself as “already there,” in a sort of empirical “prehistory” (2005, 180).

Man as modern subject is trapped in the conditions of the empirico-transcendental doublet. As Foucault puts in his *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology*, the “essential point” is that “man is neither a *homo natura*, nor a purely free subject; he is caught by the syntheses already operated by his relationship to the world” (2008b, 54–55). There is thus the appearance of the doubled dimensions of critique – the critique of empirical knowledge, but also an underlying critique through which the conditions of possibility of this type of knowledge (the former kind of critique) becomes possible.

The positioning of man as a transcendental-empirical doublet, a historical being, means that “man cannot posit himself in the immediate and sovereign transparency of a *cogito*; nor, on the other hand, can he inhabit the objective inertia of something that, by rights, does not and can never lead to self-consciousness” (Foucault 2002, 351). There is thus a movement between a desired *cogito* and a desired (im)possibility of the unthought. The contemporary *cogito* is distinct from both Descartes' *cogito* and our conception of

transcendence (353). This doublet appears necessary since transcendence in the Kantian sense is not applicable in modernity. The question is how thought can *be* in forms of non-thinking. That is to say that:

[t]he modern *cogito* does not reduce the whole being of things to thought without ramifying the being of thought right down to the inert network of what does not think... This double movement proper to the modern *cogito* explains why the ‘I think’ does not, in its case, lead to the evident truth of the ‘I am’ (Foucault 2002, 353).

In other words, the modern *cogito* cannot have “I am” follow “I think” because it is impossible to think one’s being as the language into which thought is located. As Canguilhem puts it in a reading of the *cogito* in *OT*, the Kantian “I think” is a “restricted representation” because it cannot access its own (transcendental) foundation. It is thus distinct from the Cartesian *cogito*, because it cannot know itself as itself (2005, 89-90). In this sense, man’s positive being is both in and not in his empiricity – language, life, labour. The *cogito* and the unthought is a doublet that itself doubles the empirical-transcendental. That is to say that man is neither fully self-determining, nor fully determined (Foucault 2002, 351). This poses some serious problems for the question of the self-determining autonomous subject, examined in Chapter Four. The duality between the (contemporary) *cogito* and the unthought “expresses the fundamental reality of man as both experiencing subject and the never fully understood (indeed, always somehow misunderstood) object of that experience” (Gutting 1989, 203). Indeed, as Han explains, the position of the Kantian subject, as the basis *for* knowledge, is also “*immutable in its very instability*, which is the reason why the empirico-transcendental duality was found to be unsurpassable (hence the Analytic of Finitude)” (2005, 199). This immutability, as a recursive practice, as I will discuss in more detail below and in Chapter Four, is the condition of modern subjectivity.

The final double through which the aporia of modern knowledge, the analytic of finitude functions, is what Foucault calls the “retreat and return of the origin.” That is to say that the appearance of man has a significant effect on the question of origins and foundations. Man is revealed only as connected to a previously existing historicity – he is an always already historical being, but is never contemporaneous with his origin. As he imagines himself as a living being, it is only against a much longer standing conception of life, and so on (Foucault 2002, 360). This historicity thus requires an origin. In modernity, there is a reversal of the relationship between origin and historicity where, as Foucault puts it, “[i]t is no longer origin that gives rise to historicity; it is historicity that, in its very fabric, makes possible the necessity of an origin which must be both internal and foreign to it” (359). The empirical sciences of man thus require an origin through which their historicity appears, but can never access that origin. The temporal location of man is always in the present as he is cut off from both his origin and his promised future. This is what Foucault refers to as the modern retreat of the origin, which also significantly poses the problem of repetition:

[I]n setting itself the task of restoring the domain of the original, modern thought immediately encounters the recession of the origin; and, paradoxically, it proposes the solution of advancing in the direction of this ever-deepening recession; it tries to make it appear on the far side of experience, as that which sustains it by its very retreat, as that which is nearest to its most visible possibility, as that which is, within thought, imminent; and if the recession of the origin is thus posited in its greatest clarity, is it not the origin itself that is set free and travels backwards until it reaches itself again, in the dynasty of its archaism? This is why modern thought is doomed, at every level, to its great preoccupation with recurrence, to its concern with recommencement, to that strange, stationary anxiety which forces upon it the duty of repeating repetition (363-4).

It is worth pausing on a pair of crucial phrasings as a means of rehearsing the discussion above: first, man, the Kantian subject, is the basis for modern knowledge, both the

subject who knows, and the object of knowledge, who cannot fully know himself, as the basis of his knowledge is the limit of his knowledge, is both unstable as such *and* immutable because he is unstable; second, in seeking to account for his historicity, man encounters an origin that is never accessible, always retreating. In this “stationary anxiety which forces upon it the duty of repeating repetition” is man’s condition as a recursive system, with no outside. In these phrasings is contained a devastating paradox, which is the problematique upon which the epistemological and political basis of this dissertation rests. Modern forms of knowledge, based on the figure of man, exist in a recursion whereby man seeks change within a limit that is constitutive of his desire for change.

Thus, within the positivity and finitude of man’s position as both knowing subject and object of knowledge, there is a persistent doubling and repetition. The space of the ‘and’ and the double is indicative of the form of man as *both* subject and object – man as empirical-transcendental doublet, moving between the *cogito* and the unthought, the retreat and return of the origin. Each of these aporetic “doubles” signals the death of man from the moment he is born. With this ‘and’ man moves towards “the ever-to-be-accomplished unveiling of the Same.” This space of the ‘and’ is the ever-desired asymptotic move towards a completed identity and a certain knowledge, a certain order, which, in its perpetual repetition, cannot be completed. Gutting writes that for Foucault, man is a dead end – when Foucault posits that the ambiguities of man signal an “anthropological sleep,” he means a new kind of dogmatic slumber – a being stuck in the cycles of man (1989, 207). The being of man as subject and object of modern knowledge, as described above, oscillates between its empirical and transcendental aspects, thus invalidating the limits and secure position of modern knowledge (Han 2005, 181). Man is thus a closed system: the anthropological quartet the analytic of finitude and the three

“doubles” of the empirical transcendental, the retreat and return of the origin, and the *cogito* and the unthought mean that man is stuck in his cycles. Foucault calls this the folding over of man as “anthropological,” rather than a “dogmatic” sleep: the “empirico-critical reduplication” is an attempt to make the empirical man “serve as the foundation of his own finitude” (Foucault 2002, 372).

Modernity is thus the finitude of the present, the constant anticipation of the new that yet simultaneously pre-supposes its own infinity, within limits – a kind of perpetual peace, the end of metaphysics (346). This situation is the formal underpinning of the particular epistemology of dissent I analyze in these pages. The death of man is our present recursive condition. The question of man’s death, for Foucault, signals the end of the modern episteme and, opens the possibility of:

the return of the beginning of philosophy. It is no longer possible to think in our day other than in the void left by man’s disappearance. For this void does not create a deficiency; it does not constitute a lacuna that must be filled. It is nothing more, and nothing less, than the unfolding of a space in which it is once more possible to think (373).

For Foucault, writing over half a century ago, in the early 1960s, this aporetic order is apparent, but its disintegration might also be possible, as we are beginning to understand our own conditions. This critical understanding, he suggests, might be a basis for the emergence of a new episteme. At the same time, however, he cautions that there are many for whom the conditions of the modern order of thought, of the figure of man, are crucial. As the chapters to follow will demonstrate, we are deeply committed to our hopes and desires “about man, about his reign or his liberation,” and think through the figure of man as thinking (Foucault 2002, 373). For Foucault, these commitments are on their way out. For me, reading them into the practices of classification based on modern hopes for a liberated Enlightenment subject, the system has persisted in its recursions for the past half

century, despite fifty years of theorizing about its end, and as if its end has been achieved. Looking more closely at how we seek to understand our political worlds today, as I do in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five, it becomes apparent that our understandings continue to be bound up with our desires for man's future, with the liberation of the modern subject. As Gutting has put it, awakening from the anthropological sleep means "the elimination of man as a ruling category of our thought" (1989, 207). This is, however, more than we can afford, if we wish to hold on to the promise of modern subjectivity.⁴³

Formalization as the modern project

In this concluding section to this chapter, I would like to shift perspective from the specific instability and immutability of the figure of man as the basis for modern orders of knowledge to the significance of practices of formalization as modern knowledge practices more broadly. Modern practices of classification are the product of both formalization and interpretation. Modern formalization and subjectivity are simultaneous, parallel and yet seeking to converge – in this way we can see the problem of much of the human sciences. Foucault sums up the emergence of man which inaugurated the modern Western *episteme* as follows:

the domain of the pure forms of knowledge becomes isolated, attaining both autonomy and sovereignty in relation to all empirical knowledge, causing the endless birth and rebirth of a project to formalize the concrete and to constitute, in spite of everything, pure sciences; positively, the empirical domains become linked with reflections on subjectivity, the human being, and finitude, assuming the value and function of philosophy, as well as of the reduction of philosophy or counter-philosophy (270).

⁴³ I discuss this in more detail in Chapter Four. On an analysis of letting go of the modern subject as the question raised by *OT*, see Hamati-Ataya 2013. For Foucault in his later work, this epistemological problematic is countered by an ethical stance, with man as a spiritual rather than epistemological subject. See, for instance, Foucault 2005, Han 2005. This stance, however, can co-exist with the figure of man as foundation of modern knowledge, and, as such, is epistemologically unconvincing, as the discussion in the latter chapters will demonstrate.

In the human sciences, thus, we see the attempt to derive the formal from the empirical through the figure of man. In this sense, the problem of formalization is at the heart of the modern project (268). Indeed, Foucault writes that “[i]nterpretation and formalization have become the two great forms of analysis of our time” (325), the only forms of analysis of our time. This is why, in Chapters Three, Four and Five, I examine commentaries on protests as forms of interpretation that do not, or do not sufficiently, acknowledge the formalizations upon which their practices of interpretation rely.

In the Enlightenment Room of the British Museum, we also see this interplay between formalization and interpretation. The Enlightenment Room demonstrates Foucault’s argument that formalization is key to the modern project, as it demonstrates the effects of practices of classification as both the possibility and delimitation of modern knowledge. The Enlightenment Room suggests the obviousness of classifications but also their historicity – they both are and are not *ours*. Staged as part of the British Museum’s 250th anniversary, it is a representation of the threshold of the modern episteme as viewed from the long diagnosed end of the modern episteme. The stationary anxiety of the Enlightenment Room’s classifications suggest our problematic relation to their categories and framings. They suggest, as Foucault has argued in a text written shortly after *OT*, “The Discourse on Language,” that we cannot seek to understand what we conceive as changing or new with using our old categories, our “prior system of significations” (1972b, 229) Yet, as this chapter has attempted to demonstrate, the order of modern knowledge means that we do just that, again and again.

Chapter 2: Crises of understanding and the classification of dissent: Gramsci, Lukács, Mannheim and the epistemology of dissent

The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear. - Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 276.

Introduction

The 1920s and 1930s were an ambivalent time for Europeans: the uncertainty of the postwar future, the rise of totalitarianism, and the potential of a communist future engendered what Hannah Arendt would later call a crisis of understanding. The massive social and political upheavals brought by the war and the revolution in Russia left Europeans questioning modern norms and ideals and tested their abilities to hope for a given future.⁴⁴ This situation, Arendt would write, “brought to light the ruin of our categories of thought and standards of judgment” (Arendt 1994 [1944], 388). In particular, this situation exposed the fragility of the subject of history, the problem of the ability to act in the absence of stable ideals, to act “without a bannister” (Arendt 2018).

This historical moment produced philosophical and aesthetic traditions that sought to contend with this subjective unmooring – from phenomenology to Modernism to existentialism to new inflections of anarchism to humanistic forms of Marxism. Each of these approaches sought to grapple with, in different ways, with the ruins left by the events of the early 20th century. It was difficult to continue to imagine a stable, linear progression through time, when both understandings of time, and the experiencing subject, were profoundly de-stabilized. Walter Benjamin, characterizing this position in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History” through the figure of the angel of history,

⁴⁴ For a study of the British case see Overy 2009. For the German case, see Rabinbach 1997.

would describe the situation as a storm against which the angel cannot brace himself, as he looks back into the ruins of the past – a storm which “irresistibly propels [the angel] into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward.” This storm, Benjamin would famously conclude, is “what we call progress” (1968, 249).

In this chapter, I trace how one set of overlapping early 20th century traditions associated with revolution or radical political transformation attempted to grapple with the uncertain and ambivalent progress that characterized their times, and in particular the struggle to articulate a revolutionary subject. More specifically, this chapter addresses three major thematic orientations at work in the thought of Georgy Lukács, Antonio Gramsci, and Karl Mannheim: these thinkers’ diagnoses of the times in which they live; how these diagnoses contribute to these thinkers’ theorization of subjectivity, subjective consciousness, and subjective emancipation; and how these thinkers each come to frame the possibility of emancipation or transformation through totalization, universalization, or synthesis. Locating the thinkers I focus on here, particularly Gramsci and Lukács, in relation to the abovementioned problematiques emphasizes the significance of subjective consciousness in how they think about revolution, political transformation, or dissent more broadly. What I offer here is a necessarily partial reading that highlights the significance of the relationship between classification, subjectivity and political transformation in these thinkers’ work, as well as the centrality of a philosophy of history as a foundation for thinking through these problems. These thinkers formulate a concrete set of transformative or emancipatory aims, while recognizing the difficulty in seeking certainty or systematicity in an age of ambivalence and disenchantment, and revising their analyses accordingly. Each of these thinkers are associated with the figure of Max

Weber and, in different ways, thus associated with a neo-Kantian tradition, but augment this tradition with a Hegelian Marxism that attempts to overcome certain Marxist tendencies to reduce political questions to a historical determinism that, as noted above, had begun to appear less and less plausible without a serious rethinking of the transformation of the subject of history.⁴⁵ In this sense, I seek to both connect and contrast these thinkers' work from the theorization pursued through Foucault's *The Order of Things* in the previous chapter. Whereas for Foucault, the problematic of man is his simultaneous position as subject and object of knowledge, as expressed in Kantian critical philosophy, for the thinkers examined in this chapter, the response to this problem is in the objectification of the subject in history (Hall 2007, 12).

I focus on these thinkers' work from 1920-1935, when they are particularly responding to and participating in a period of intense questioning of norms. To contextualize these debates, I suggest that they should be read in relation to a frequently discussed tension between Romanticism and Enlightenment traditions (Beiser 2003), and, in particular, through an examination of how certain Romantic traditions did not reject but rather furthered Enlightenment ideals (Beiser 2003, 34). This relationship between Romantic and Enlightenment traditions of thought is also present in these thinkers'

⁴⁵ Lukács and Gramsci have been variously identified as the fathers of the tradition of "Western Marxism," a Marxism contra that of Lenin's economicistic determinism, which took more seriously Marx's humanist and emancipatory aims, and, in particular, his Hegelian influences. A phrase first coined by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his 1955 *Adventures of the Dialectic*, Western Marxism was popularized in relation to the work that emerged around Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* (1971[1923]). For instance, Arato has argued that the analysis Lukács undertakes in *History and Class Consciousness* consists of an incomplete "general critique of objectivistic deterministic Marxism" (1972, 37). I do not work through the literature on Western Marxism in this text for two reasons. First, because my aim in this chapter is to work through how these thinkers seek to understand and classify the times in which they live, rather than to examine how they themselves have been classified, and, second, because my interest is somewhat broader than the Marxist tradition, to consider as well how other thinkers of the period, in particular Karl Mannheim, grappled with questions of dissent and political transformation. For a reading of the Western Marxist tradition, see Jay 1984.

interpretations of Marx, and in the distinction between their interpretations of Marx and the more orthodox Marxisms of the period.

The primary texts with which this chapter deals – Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* (1971 [1923]), Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* (1979 [1929]), and Gramsci's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971[1948]) – emerge from distinct contexts and address specific political problems. For Lukács, in the early 1920s a relatively recent convert to communism for whom the promise of aesthetic form had offered something of a bannister upon which to think, it is imperative to center the question of subjective consciousness in relation to deterministic Leninist articulations of the future. For Gramsci, the question of the specificity of the community in which political action is to occur, and, in particular, the specificity of the Italian context, is crucial.⁴⁶ For Mannheim, the question of the intellectual in relation to society, and, in particular, to social democracy, was central. Finally, while the works examined here were all written between 1920-1935, their times of publication and translation ranged over a much broader period.⁴⁷ Thus, while the thinkers may have been responding to problems within the period of 1920-1935, the reception, revision, and translation of their texts was spread over the course of the 20th century.

⁴⁶ On the distinctions between Leninism and Gramsci's Italian Marxism and Gramsci's relationship to the Italian Communist party, see Piccone 1983 (especially Chapter 4) and Luke 1990 (especially Chapter 3).

⁴⁷ Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* was published in German in 1923, but was not translated into English until 1971. Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, written between 1929 and 1935, were published in part in Italian in 1948. An English translation of some of the writings appeared in 1957, but the comprehensive *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, to which I refer here, was not published until 1971. Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* was published in German in 1929, and in English in 1936. The English edition of the text differs significantly from the German due to Mannheim's own adaptations of the text for an Anglo-Saxon audience. Kettler, Meja, and Stehr (1984) suggest that there is a theoretical shift in the English edition from one influenced by "Marxism, historicism, and Idealism" to one speaking to "empiricism, psychologism, and pragmatism" (164). For this reason, my examinations here, though drawing on the English translation of *Ideology and Utopia*, also extensively reference secondary literature which examines the German edition. See Kettler, Meja and Stehr (1984, 111-115) for a discussion of the debates around the revisions and translations of the German version of *Ideology and Utopia* into English for an Anglo-Saxon audience.

Nonetheless, these thinkers connect the major epistemological and political questions of their age and consider these questions in relation to both a specific, progressivist theory of the subject and subjective emancipation through history. In distinct ways, they take up the relationship between subject and object discussed in the previous chapter – the space of the *and* between “transcendental subject” and “empirical object” that Foucault identifies with modern thought, the ever desired, asymptotic move towards a completed identity and a certain knowledge, and whose stability is brought into sharp relief in the early 20th century. Lukács, Mannheim, and Gramsci are thus interested in thinking about *how* questions of knowledge are connected to human freedom and its realization through dissent, Marxist revolution, or the reconfiguration of social groups. In other words, they are concerned with how to frame categories of understanding so as to enable subjective emancipation in history. They consider these questions, this chapter will suggest, through the conceptualization of totality, universalization or synthesis. These totalizations take various forms, whether the proletariat as totality, counter-hegemony, or the synthesis required to overcome what Georg Simmel referred to as the tragedy of culture, the overwhelming of the subject’s capacities and individual will (Simmel 1997). These processes of totalization are the means through which subjective emancipation is to be achieved. The movement towards totalization itself takes place through revolutionary practices, or practices of resistance (though this is less so the case in Mannheim’s thought).

The work of Lukács, Gramsci, and Mannheim is instructive for this project because their political thought takes epistemological questions seriously. In particular, the question of understanding is here bound up with a question of indeterminacy – an inability to think through inherited categories and trajectories. In his forward to

Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, Louis Wirth writes that, throughout the 20th century, and in particular during the early decades of that century, “[w]e are witnessing not only a general distrust of the validity of ideas but of the motives of those who assert them” (1979, xiii). This statement suggests Mannheim's dual concern with the relationship between epistemology and political action, the relationship between how modes of understanding are connected to modes of acting politically. This concern, in different ways, animates the thought of the other two main thinkers discussed in this chapter, Lukács and Gramsci.

This chapter argues that each of these thinkers is thus classifying politically. Their writing is a practice of diagnosing their contemporary condition. They are describing a political and epistemological condition, and prescribing a future based on this classification, where classification “is inescapably connected with the totality of human knowledge of what exists” (Boyne 2006, 22). Thus, in various degrees of directness, Gramsci, Lukács, and Mannheim are addressing questions of the relationships between subjectivity, epistemological totality, and resistance or emancipation. They are elucidating the close connection between a politics of classification, theories of the subject and a category of class to which subjective emancipation is, for them, linked. This is the politics through which identities and actions are described as intelligible or possible. This process of classification is thus crucial to understanding the present, possibilities and programs for future action, and, most significantly, the acting subject. While the thinkers I have chosen to examine in this chapter are each grappling with the limits of both the inherited radical political traditions in which they are located (in particular, the rigidities of more deterministic forms of Marxism), and the uncertainties of the times in which they write, they have nonetheless become part of a tradition that now

represents one of two possible (and interrelated) forms of progressive political literature in the West. They are thus indicative of a hegemony of *form* (as discussed in the Introduction, Chapter One, and Chapter Five of this dissertation), or lines of thought which tend to be reductionist and inflexible towards their ideological commitments. Lukács, Gramsci, and Mannheim's responses to the general intellectual and political atmosphere in which they lived are instructive for a historical understanding of the classification of dissent in a moment where given categories are insufficient. They are also instructive as an instance of a renewed set of radical political categories of thought that emerged during this period – the categories of totality, subjective and objective consciousness, alienation and reification, hegemony and counter-hegemony, for instance. The situation discussed in this chapter is thus in many ways comparable to the early 21st century attempts to classify practices of dissent with which this dissertation is concerned. However, as Chapters Three, Four and Five will argue, it is with versions of the above-mentioned (and other) categories of the past that contemporary commentators are attempting to read an uncertain present.

Inheritances: Enlightenment, Romanticism, Marx

My aim in this section is to highlight the inheritances through which Lukács, Gramsci, and Mannheim sought to understand and act in a historical moment that resisted easy classification. In so doing, they created new categories for their times, and sought to reconstruct the subjective and epistemological footholds undone by the uncertainty of their time. Their approaches are instructive, I suggest, because they inform, and to some extent offer a mirror for, the contemporary commentaries on dissent this dissertation takes up in Chapters Three, Four and Five. They do so, in particular, through their

attempts to grapple with uncertainty and pluralism through totalizing or synthesizing prescriptive visions that offer a route to subjective emancipation through a unity of both historical movement and subjective consciousness.

The questions of the crisis of culture, the diagnosis of a present and the possibility for a political future with which Lukács, Gramsci and Mannheim were bound up can be read through a longer standing set of debates, particularly in Germany, and the classifications with which these debates have been associated. Here, I am referring to the assumed polarization between Enlightenment and Romantic traditions of thought, and, in particular, the question of subjectivity as it is developed through a subset of the Romantic tradition in Germany.⁴⁸ The polarization between Enlightenment and Romanticism is often described through a series of bifurcations – between the valorization of reason over emotion, intellect over sensation, science over myth or religion, cosmopolitanism over parochialism and, through these approaches, the emancipation of the subject through history, often described in reference to Kant’s “What is Enlightenment?” By contrast, Romanticism is described as rejecting the deterministic progress sought by Enlightenment reason. The Romantics, contra Enlightenment thinkers, are said to emphasize the subjective, the feeling, the unconscious, seeking individual autonomy but also community connection, and focusing on expression through aesthetics, in this way

⁴⁸ While there are many traditions of thought described as Romantic, often associated with countries of origin (German, French, Anglo-Saxon), and philosophical or aesthetic orientations, it is difficult to place these into one category based on certain commonalities. Here, I discuss a period in the German conversation, in particular the early Romanticism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, identified by Frederick Beiser as both engaged in political issues, and significantly taking up and responding to the questions of Enlightenment thinkers. See, for instance, Beiser 1992; Beiser 2003; Bleiker 2000. Similarly, it is also necessary to qualify the use of the concept of Enlightenment, which, as Vierhaus has pointed out (1996), was rare in England and the Netherlands, as compared to France and Germany. For Vierhaus, this is due to less “need for programmatic slogans” there, as compared to countries where it was more difficult to assert Enlightenment ideas against traditional authorities. There, Vierhaus writes, Enlightenment appears particularly critical and aimed at political reform, and driven by the ideals of improvement and progress. For a longer treatment of understandings and mobilizations of Enlightenment, see Chapter One.

re-centering the subject over the search for scientific objectivity.⁴⁹ This polarization persists despite historical studies that complicate the conceptual divide between early Romantic thinkers in Germany and the Enlightenment perspectives to which they are responding.⁵⁰

Frederick Beiser (1992; 2003) has written extensively on how early Romantics were not merely reacting to or rejecting Enlightenment ideals, but actually taking up and developing them, particularly in the case of questions of subjectivity, totality, freedom and political reform located in a future rather than a nostalgia for a medieval past. This assumed polarity between Enlightenment and Romantic traditions is also, I suggest, put into question in the work of Lukács, Gramsci, and Mannheim, and thus helps us to understand the distinctiveness of the positions from which they framed their understandings. Taking up both neo-Kantian understandings of subjectivity and a renewed interest in the location of Hegelian influences in the work of Marx, these thinkers sought to create new categories for understanding and acting in their present.⁵¹

⁴⁹ For one example of an argument that sets up this kind of polarization between Enlightenment and Romantic thought, see Bleiker 2000, 74-95. For a study that rejects this polarization between Enlightenment and Romanticism, see Beiser 2003, 43-55.

⁵⁰ It is also worth noting, however, that this polarization has effects. That is to say that the mobilization of the distinction claimed between Enlightenment and Romantic understandings of politics, subjectivity, and history, is politically significant as a mode of classifying, understanding, and, in some cases, valorizing or dismissing one form of understanding over another. See Chapter Five for a longer discussion of how Enlightenment and Romantic classifications may be mobilized in understandings of contemporary practices of dissent.

⁵¹ In addition, the work of Lukács, Mannheim and Gramsci can also be examined in relation to the attempts of a number of late 19th and early 20th century neo-Kantian thinkers to rehabilitate the question of the acting subject. See, for instance, Andrew Arato's "The Neo-idealist Defence of Subjectivity" (1974). Arato begins from the necessity to examine neo-Kantian debates of the turn of the 20th century as a means for understanding Marxism after Lukács' *History and Class-Consciousness*. In so doing, Arato traces the development of a humanistic, anti-positivist neo-Kantianism through such figures as Wilhelm Dilthey, Heinrich Rickert, and Georg Simmel each of who, in different ways, examined the problematic of the gap between subject and object, and sought to restore a vision of a transcendental subject of history. See also, Thompson, who writes that for the neo-Kantians "the knowledge of man had to be approached from a point of view that brought together subjective and objective moments of understanding" (2011, 4). These thinkers, as Bronner puts it, "were concerned with the alienated character of modern society and the impact of reification" (2011, 20) where Kant's maxim that individuals should never be treated as a means to an end, but as ends in themselves was being turned on its head in the rationalization of contemporary society best identified by Max Weber, whose salon Lukács frequented, and where he met Rickert and Simmel.

For instance, as Michael Löwy (1979) has written, Lukács created the term “neo-Romantic anti-capitalism” as the basis for his approach to Marxism.⁵² This category can be viewed as key to Lukács’ approach to questions of the present, the subject, and the possibility of a future totality, and as connected to how these questions are taken up by Gramsci and Mannheim.

To examine how Lukács, Gramsci and Mannheim perceived the relationship between their historical situation and the theoretical problems they inherited, it is helpful to briefly examine the above-mentioned relationship between Enlightenment and early Romantic thought. As noted, Beiser rejects the view that Romanticism is the antithesis of Enlightenment, or that the emergence of Romanticism as reaction to Enlightenment signals the end of the age of Enlightenment. He argues that this distinction is an oversimplification, as Romanticism has several distinct phases and that, consequently, the relationship between Enlightenment and Romanticism also changes. Beiser suggests that it is a mistake to view Romanticism as a reactionary movement that seeks a reinstatement of the past, as the political program of the early Romantics were essentially reformist (2003, 34).⁵³ The view of Romanticism as seeking a re-instatement of the past is associated with a number of Marxist scholars of the late 19th and early 20th century, who also, Beiser argues, did not see the specificity of the early Romantic period, but rather sought to reject Romantically-influenced utopian socialist and feudal socialist movements of their day.⁵⁴

⁵² See Löwy 1979 and Sayre and Löwy 1984.

⁵³ In particular, Beiser argues that the understanding of Romanticism as a conservative reaction to Enlightenment only makes sense for the last phase of Romanticism (2003, 44). This is a view that is taken up significantly at the end of the 19th century by German conservatives and nationalists. Beiser notes that Lukács’ attack on Romanticism as a form of proto-fascism in his 1947 “Romanticism and the Ideal of German Literature” was a particular failure in grasping the distinctions between different phases of Romanticism (Beiser 2003, 200n25).

⁵⁴ These views are addressed in more detail in relation to the autonomous and horizontalist movements discussed in Chapter Five. See also, footnote below on utopian socialism.

Beiser shows that while Romantics may have rejected some aspects of the Enlightenment attitude, they also, in many ways, “radicalized” it (2003, 35). While early Romantics had complex and often ambivalent relationships with the Enlightenment, they were mostly loyal to the Kantian values of Enlightenment – the imperative to think for oneself and develop one’s capacities through education. However, it must be noted that for the Romantics, education must not be an imposition or a form of conditioning imposed by the state, but should reflect the specific preferences and choices of the individual, rather than simply reflecting norms and traditions (46-47). Here, then, Beiser suggests, we can also locate the early Romantics’ commitment to individual freedom, or subjective emancipation (29).

The early Romantics, for Beiser, were thus not reactionaries against modernity, but rather “champions of progress,” who valued reason, and particularly the individual’s capacity for critique. Rather than seeking a return to earlier, medieval forms of social organization, the Romantics valued the freedoms afforded by their societies, especially those that enabled individual self-realization. In sum, then, Beiser argues that the hopes of early Romantic thinkers were not located in the past, but rather in the future (32-33). These hopes rely on a “holistic ideal,” a unity, or “wholeness,” that requires the affirmation of both reason and sensibility. Hegel is often viewed as a turning point in the tension between Enlightenment and Romanticism, as fusing Enlightenment and Romantic understandings of the development of the acting subject in history and in society (Bleiker 2000, 108). Most significantly, “for Hegel, the subject and object of knowledge were inherently identical because the latter was produced out of and constituted by the former” (Jay 1996, 54). Martin Jay makes a strong case for Hegel’s distinctive contribution to the tradition of totality, or wholeness. For the purposes of this chapter, most significant here

is the reading of Hegel that identifies Hegel's understanding of totality vis-à-vis "a collective subject of history," which would be transmuted to the proletariat in the work of Lukács.⁵⁵

This question of holism, wholeness, unity, or, as I refer to the concept below, totality, was the fundamental Romantic ideal, to be pursued through the unity of the individual's autonomy and self-realization through education and the community. Romantic "longing" or "striving" is thus the aim to connect, using one's reason, oneself, nature, and one's community (Beiser 2003, 25). Similarly, the balanced whole that Romantics sought within the individual required the education of both reason and sensibility, both intellect and feeling (27). This question of wholeness or totality, in different ways, would become a crucial aim in the thought of Lukács, Gramsci, and Mannheim.

To begin to consider how Lukács, Gramsci, and Mannheim would approach the aim for totality, however, it is first necessary to discuss the question of labour, and thus the relationship between Marx and the Romantic tradition. The mid-19th century labour movement in Germany viewed itself as "the legitimate heir of the Enlightenment," against the bourgeois middle classes' acceptance of a modernity that retained a conservative political constitution and social hierarchy (Vierhaus 1996). The labour movement sought a progress that aimed for a "revolutionary transformation of ...political relations" (1996). Such a transformation would only be possible through the proletariat, as the bourgeoisie, the middle class, had lost its reformist political spirit. Thus, in order for industrialization and its attendant scientific and technical progress to enable social and political progress, they must be under the control of the proletariat, whose interests were

⁵⁵ For Beiser, however, Hegel's agenda was "typical" of the romantics of his period (2003, 33).

those of all of humanity (1996). This was a view expressed by Marx and Engels in their *Communist Manifesto*, and later in the goal of a “scientific socialism” (Engels 1770 [1880]).⁵⁶ While *The Communist Manifesto* contains both a scientific aim and the aim of a “Romantic revolt” against existing industrial society, this approach is muted in Marx’s thought after the mid-19th century (476). However, as framed by Lukács, Marxist thought can be read as “as a sustained (and unequal) antagonism between Romantic and Enlightenment-Utilitarian moments” (Breines 1977, 473).⁵⁷ In Marx, then, and, as I will discuss below, in the Marxist thought of Lukács and Gramsci, and the more broadly critical thought of Mannheim, there are attempts to bridge Enlightenment and Romantic traditions of thought.

Lukács’ “neo-Romantic anti-capitalism,” as expressed most forcefully in the essays collected in *History and Class Consciousness*, sought to connect the Marxism of his day to its “lost Romantic dimension” (Breines 1977, 479). This connection is based above all on a holism, a “dream of the whole man,” the early Romantic hope which, for Lukács, can be realized substantively through Marxist political transformation (Arato and Breines 1979). Most important here is a conviction that centers subjective consciousness and the subject’s power in creating their world. In *History and Class Consciousness*, this integration of neo-Romanticism and Marxist thought takes place through Lukács’ interpretation of Marx’s theory of alienation in his theory of reification, where the scientific outlook prevalent in industrial societies makes for a stultification of human

⁵⁶ Engels’ 1880 use of “scientific socialism” (1970 [1880]) is in distinction to the “utopian socialism” advocated by Henri Saint-Simon, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and others. The frequently cited polarization between Enlightenment and Romantic traditions of thought can be connected to the later 19th century political movements, like utopian and feudal socialism, that, in part through artisan struggles against industrial capitalism, seek to enact earlier forms of social organization (Breines 1977, 474) and that do not require total political transformation.

⁵⁷ Lukács’ reading would be validated in the late 1920s with the recovery of Marx’s early writings. See Jay 1986, Chapter 1.

existence. Lukács takes up the question of revolution not through a privileging of the role of economic relations, but rather in the question of totality or wholeness. This involved the primacy of the universal over the particular, the historicity of totality, and the claim that the movement of totality in historical time “consists of a coming to consciousness... of the makers of history, namely the proletariat” where, totality is “totality of being,” to be “re-created in the form of Communism” (Breines 1977, 484). Through the subjectivity of the proletariat and the totality of their perspective, Lukács thus connects Marxist aims for political transformation with Romantic hopes for subjective self-realization and subjective unity with the community.

The subjective dimension of human experience – and in particular the autonomy of the individual – is also crucial to Gramsci’s understanding of political transformation, where Gramsci described his work as “materialism perfected by the work of idealist philosophy” (Femia 1981, 113). Here, Gramsci thinks that neither Marx’s theoretical approaches, nor the Enlightenment ideals to which Gramsci is also sympathetic, should be “reified into a closed system of scientific certainties and absolute truths” (1981, 245). Like Lukács, Gramsci viewed a total overturning of political institutions as crucial to political transformation, a mass process where the people take power. Further, through his theorization of hegemony and counter-hegemony, Gramsci sought to shift the focus of Marxist thought away from economics and towards the broader field of culture and society as the site of subjective emancipation (Cohen and Arato 1994, 144).

Lukács’ influence on Mannheim as a critical theorist is apparent in his sociology of knowledge. Mannheim’s earliest work is a 1921 review of Lukács’ *Theory of The Novel*, in which Mannheim attempts to think through how the tension between Romantic and Enlightenment (in the form of Kantian idealist) views appear in his time. Mannheim

is influenced by Marxist theories of ideology and the neo-Kantian epistemologies that reject the positivist quest for an objective truth, centering subjective experience as the basis for understanding ideology and social position (Mannheim 1979[1929]). As Kettler, Meja and Stehr suggest, Mannheim was far from alone in his time, in aiming to “reconcile... the Romantic insight into the flux of things and the Idealist vision of a rational order” (1984, 53). Mannheim noted that his “general position” was “dialectical and closest to Hegel’s stating that ‘there is an existentially determined truth content in human thought at every stage of its development’ which has a graspable ‘evolutionary goal’” (Mannheim 1924:303-304; 1925:358-59, quoted in Goldman 1994, 270). Through dialectical movement, Mannheim argued that an absolute was discoverable. This was an absolute for the period of upheaval in which Mannheim was writing, and, as Wirth puts it in his preface to the first English edition of *Ideology and Utopia*, could only have been written in its time (1936, xxvii), when already unstable categories of understanding appeared to be in crisis. Indeed, in the text itself, Mannheim identifies the question of false consciousness as a question of ideological knowledge, where “knowledge is distorted and ideological when it fails to take account of the new realities applying to a situation, and when it attempts to conceal them by thinking of them in categories which are inappropriate” (1979 [1929], 86). Thus, for Mannheim, as for Lukács and Gramsci, as the discussion below will attempt to demonstrate, the question of classification, and the revision of categories to fit the context – and the crises – of their times, is crucial. How, and to what extent, however, these categories ‘fit’ and how they take up historical inheritances – in this case those of Enlightenment and Romantic traditions – is also crucial.

Diagnoses: Crisis, reification, sociology of knowledge

In this section, I suggest that Gramsci, Lukács and Mannheim's political thought in the three major texts under examination here (*The Prison Notebooks*, *History and Class Consciousness* and *Ideology and Utopia*) begins from their views that they were living through the transformation of modern culture, a period of profound uncertainty and change. In a text that diagnoses the early 20th century in Germany, Anson Rabinbach has described the intellectual thought of this period as a “vision of a present that is so completely pathological, so utterly destitute that its very fallenness signals the inevitability of revolutionary change or transformation” (1997, epub). For each of Gramsci, Lukács and Mannheim, the period was one of crisis, understood through a Marxist-influence lens.

This question of crisis, as Kettler, Meja and Stehr note, was a key aspect of the voluminous literature of the late nineteenth and twentieth century that sought to diagnose the times (91). For Marx, when economic crises culminate in a “universal” crisis, they “disrupt... established patterns and uses of power, disturbing institutionalized order” (92). Crises thus help to enable the rise of a revolutionary class consciousness, and, in particular, “the creative ordering activity of revolution” (92). The confusion of the crisis condition engenders the emergence of a new order. Yet, for each of these thinkers, the Marxist lens was influential, but insufficient. For each of Gramsci, Lukács and Mannheim, the question of crisis is a question of the consciousness of a novel possibility. The crisis contains a prescription for a new social structure, understood through a new set of categories. Significantly for this project, it is the practice of the *diagnosis* of the crisis that is a mode of both classifying the present and the categories through which a future must be understood, based on the classification of the present. Thus, in a way, the diagnostic classification of the present prescribes a *specific* set of possible categories, and

conditions, for the future. In the following sections of this chapter, I highlight the categories of subjectivity and totality as crucial to how Gramsci, Lukács, and Mannheim diagnose and imagine a new social and political order.

Gramsci's diagnosis of the disturbance of the capitalist order in Western Europe broadly, and in Italy specifically, is oriented through his theorization of crisis, where revolutionary possibilities had to be grasped within the appropriate context, rather than imposed at will. In the prison writings, the problematic that preoccupied Gramsci was understanding how the crisis conditions in Italy in the 1920s had prevented the formation of a workers' state (2015, 42). The capacity of the ruling class to sustain its hegemony – its consensus over the political, social, and cultural values of a society through its economic leadership – was crucial to the emergence of crises. In particular, the disturbances of the capitalist order that Gramsci calls crises occur when the ruling class has lost its “consensus, [when]... it is no longer ‘leading,’ but only ‘dominant’” (Gramsci 1971, 275). When the ruling class has failed in some way, whether through a political failure, or an overreaching in its demands from the majority, there emerges “a crisis of authority” which is also “the crisis of hegemony, or general crisis of the State” (Gramsci 1971, 210). Gramsci's definition of the crisis emergent from this situation is perhaps his most cited comment: “The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear” (275). It is from the recognition of these “morbid symptoms” as present in specific events, from a particular “conjunctural crisis,” that an “organic crisis” of the classes may appear (177-8). In the space between the old and the new, there is a potential for a new consensus, which may emerge in a number of possible ways, from new alliances to charismatic leaders to populist workers' movements (210-11).

However, while Gramsci diagnosed the possibility and the necessity for a shift in power relations, his experiences with the Italian Communist Party during the rise of Mussolini showed him the difficulty of making such a shift.⁵⁸ What is perhaps most significant in Gramsci's diagnosis of crises is that the crisis of authority is in what he calls "the interregnum," the uncertain space between old and new.⁵⁹ Gramsci, however, broadened the understanding of the concept to encompass a socio-political-cultural order that has lost its purchase and can no longer hold. At the same time, as the new conditions have not yet been understood, or diagnosed, "a new frame... is still at the designing stage, has not yet been fully assembled, or is not strong enough to be put in its place" (Bauman 2012, 49). Thus, for Gramsci, the outcome of the crisis is not at all clear – "given the character of the ideologies," he writes, a crisis may "be resolved in favour of a restoration of the old," and the "depression" of the uncertainty of the crisis may simply read to a slight reform, a new "arrangement" that is merely a version of the old – a Catholicism become Jesuitism, for instance (Gramsci 1971, 276).

This ambivalence is in part due to the necessity of the transformation of political and cultural values for a broader overturning of the extant hegemony. The crisis of authority Gramsci identifies, it is important to underline, is also a crisis of values – it is in this sense that the crisis is accompanied by "depression" and "morbid symptoms." It is also due to the crisis of values with which Gramsci diagnoses his time that it is very difficult to create or even imagine a new set of categories through which to understand cultural, social and political conditions. Gramsci writes that the "death of the old ideologies takes the form of skepticism with regard to all theories and general formulae"

⁵⁸ See, for instance, Bellamy and Schechter 1993, Liguori 2015.

⁵⁹ This interregnum, as Zygmunt Bauman has explained, was originally used to indicate the time between the death of one monarch and the succession of the next (2012,49).

and to “a form of politics... which is cynical in its immediate manifestation” (276). In this way, then, Gramsci can be read as diagnosing the conditions under which he is living as undergoing a crisis of categories which is both political and epistemological – the uncertainty of the massive changes which Europe, and Italy, are undergoing requires new forms of understanding, in order to formulate new approaches to political action; however, as Gramsci makes clear, this condition also makes the bases upon which to imagine new categories deeply unstable. We know that for Gramsci, these categories, and the political transformation they drive, are to be found in revolutionary praxis, where, to enable political transformation during a crisis of authority it is crucial to “attack an existing ‘hegemony’ and to create an alternative proletarian source for it within present society,” tasks accomplished in part through political education (Adamson 1980, 141). These questions will be addressed below in the discussion of how, from this diagnosis of crisis and its possibilities, Gramsci rethinks subjectivity.

Like Gramsci, Lukács viewed early 20th century Europe as experiencing a period of crisis. Indeed, even before he became a Marxist, Lukács considered his time as one of a “crisis of bourgeois culture,” and, more specifically, of “bourgeois society and ‘man’” (Breines 1977, 481). And, like Gramsci, Lukács believed social transformation to be the solution to this crisis. In this diagnosis, Lukács was influenced by the diagnoses of those in his intellectual circle – Weber’s ‘iron cage’ of bureaucratic rationalization (2004) and Simmel’s “tragedy of culture” (1997), among others. Lukács read these diagnoses through Marx’s discussion of alienation and the fetishism of commodities to introduce the concept of reification as the diagnosis of the experience of life under capitalism (Jay 1986, 109). As in Gramsci’s diagnosis of the crisis, this diagnosis of reification engenders a structure of transformation – the diagnosis contains its prescription.

In drawing out a definition of reification, Lukács highlights how the process of rationalization identified by Weber moves toward the “progressive elimination of the qualitative human and individual attributes of the worker” (Lukács 1971 [1923], 88). Lukács thus connects Marx’s critique of political economy to Weber’s diagnosis of the development and movement of Western rationality. However, he also broadens Marx’s economic categories to extend to all social existence, and Weber’s analytic to the possibility of the transformation of capitalist society (Arato 1972, 30-1).⁶⁰ Lukács positions the recognition of commodity fetishism through the concept of reification as the diagnosis of the capitalist system, and as “the central structural problem of capitalist society in all its aspects” (Lukács 1971 [1923], 83). More specifically, reification is a diagnostic category that provides an understanding of the movement of history, the subject in history, and the subject and object of knowledge, and to the possibility of overcoming reification through consciousness of its working in the ordering of the world and our understanding of the world. Reification allows Lukács to imagine a possible movement towards an emancipatory future in a time when such a future – and the hopes upon which it might have been pinned – remained elusive.

For Lukács, reification characterizes all relations in modern capitalist society. It is, put simply, the ‘thingification’ of the human world, which has occurred when human activity, or human labour, has lost its human character. As Lukács puts it, reification is “a relation between people [that] takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires...an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people” (Lukács 1971 [1923], 83). Under these conditions, the drivers of social life are effectively the abstract forces of rationalization

⁶⁰ My discussion of Lukács’ theorization of reification in the following paragraphs is heavily indebted to Andrew Arato’s very rich discussion of the concept in his “Lukács’ Theory of Reification” (1972).

external to the actions of humans – the economy, bureaucracy and so on (Breines 1972, 76-7). This reified situation, whereby time, thought, and social processes are all viewed as objects, produces the fundamental antinomies of modern thought (theory/practice, subject/object, abstract/concrete and so on), and, in turn, the stultification of historical movement – the crisis of authority, the tragedy of culture, the iron cage – through which thinkers of the time characterized their period. All social processes become objectified when society mediates productive activity through units of time – as in, for instance, wage labour. As Arato puts it, discussing the reification of consciousness in particular:

The reification of consciousness is the passive and contemplative intellectual reproduction of the immediacy of reification. According to Lukács this form of reification also moves on the total social level. The worker becomes the passive individualized spectator of a process in which his fragmented activity is the object of a process that he can only observe but not control or transform (1972, 37).

Reification, Lukács notes, thus creates a kind of ‘second nature’ of “pseudo-things” from an objective perspective and the alienation of human beings who are forced to act and work within this second nature (Arato 1972, 33).⁶¹ The system of capital is thus made to appear natural, and its overturning must be not only a matter of theory, but also revolutionary *praxis*. The theorization of reification serves as a kind of diagnostic foundation through which to understand the present, and as an opening to transformation through the formulation of new categories of subjectivity and social order, to be discussed below.

From the perspective of class, reification is defined by and defines the class interest of the bourgeoisie. That is to say, while the reified world appears natural and eternal to the bourgeoisie, for the proletariat, reification is a “historical limit,” which

⁶¹ For an account of how Lukács treats the concept of nature, see Arato 1972, 39-43.

“conflicts with the historical interest of the proletariat to liberate itself” (Arato 1972, 57).

It is the “*the social existence* of the proletariat,” of both the individual and the class, which contains the possibility of the overcoming of reification. This social existence, crucially, is one defined by an absence of subjectivity for both bourgeoisie and proletariat. While the bourgeoisie maintains the illusion of subjectivity through positions within the ‘second nature’ defined by reification (owner, master, director and so on), they are ultimately also subjected to that second nature, to the forces of rationalization. By contrast, the worker’s activity or practice is “purely objective” while his subjectivity, what remains of it, consists of “‘contemplation’ of his own (and other workers’) alienated activity” (Arato 1972, 33). This subject-object split is constitutive of the reified world and is thus the basis for the necessity of a new classification, a new series of categories.

It is in the worker’s *recognition* of the process of reification, however, even if this recognition is absolutely minimal, that Lukács sees the possibility of revolutionary praxis (Arato 1972, 59), the revolutionary solution to philosophical, cultural and practical antinomies (Breines 1972, 76-7).⁶² The worker’s consciousness of reification must be in the worker recognizing himself, in his own labour, as a commodity, as “the *subject...of the economic process*” (1972, 61). This transformation, as will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, requires the transformation of the subject-object relation through the becoming conscious of the proletariat as a class. In this way, for Lukács, revolution

⁶² While this is a much-contested statement (see for instance, Jay 1986, discussed below), Arato argues that “Lukács’ *general argument* is explicitly non-deterministic” because disrupting reification requires both the formation of a collective subject to enact this disruption and this subject’s understanding of the contradictions within the structure of reification, which also make its disruption or overturning possible (Arato 1972, 64). While there are a number of possible fluidities here, Lukács’ ultimate claim of a totalization of subjectivity and political community that must emerge through the overturning of reification is certainly more deterministic than that of Gramsci and Mannheim, as will be discussed below. It is, however, deterministic in a different way from the economicist Marxisms of his day, in centering consciousness and subjective action.

becomes not merely about “the abolition of capitalism but the anthropological foundations of repression associated with prehistory” (Bronner 2011, 14), a kind of overcoming of the modern subject.

Through this self-consciousness, there is a disruption of epistemological claims. The proletariat’s self-consciousness, in short, “*brings about an objective structural change in the object of knowledge*” (Lukács 1971 [1923], 1969, emphasis in original). Indeed, reification can be understood as an *epistemological* category. This is the case in at least two ways: in the consciousness of the proletariat as a class, and in the context of knowledge in the form of “scientific consciousness” in the human sciences. I’ll briefly consider Lukács’ critique of scientific consciousness before returning to the question of the understanding of reification for the proletariat.

Lukács argues that the bourgeois sciences address very partial interests and in particular those concerned with the formalization of rationality. They are thus associated with a loss of totality, and a freezing of a given moment. Lukács uses the examples of economics and law to show that, as Arato puts it, the human sciences are “not open to the dialectical relationship of man as subject, and man as object of the historical process” (Arato 1972, 38). The “scientific consciousness” through which the human sciences view the world thus (re)produces and reflects the reified world. This reading is consistent with Foucault’s critique of the human sciences, as examined in the previous chapter. The perception of the reified world hides “the pathological shape of modern society from its own participants.” Once the proletariat becomes conscious of itself as a collectivity, its ways of knowing and acting in the world can also change (Thompson 2011, 6). Thus, history is “the history of collective human transformation, where the working class would now, through its collective agency, transform society in its own interests, the interests

identical with all of humankind” (6). This fusion of interests restores the necessary totality of the world, for Lukács, as will be addressed in the last section of this chapter. In this sense, the proletariat’s consciousness of itself in a reified world is a form of dissent, which, for Lukács, sets off the possibility for broader transformation through revolution. It is crucial for Lukács that this diagnosis – through the classification of reification – contains its prescription and is thus a political project. The theoretical diagnosis – and its categories – are required for the practical action of revolution.

Mannheim takes up the challenges of the time by also offering a methodological and epistemological response in the form of his theorization of the sociology of knowledge as a classificatory instrument. I engage David Kettler, Volker Meja and Nico Stehr’s (1984) assessment of Karl Mannheim’s work, specifically in *Ideology and Utopia*, as a diagnosis of the time.⁶³ Specifically, the sociology of knowledge considered the social position from which one formulated ideas to be crucial to the content of those ideas. Mannheim described sociology of knowledge as a system that engaged all varieties and types of knowledge as a means of “obtain[ing] systematic comprehension of the relationship between social existence and thought” (Mannheim 1979, 278).

In this way, Mannheim, like Lukács, whose circles Mannheim frequented in the 1910s, sought to understand the uncertain situation of his time through intellectual intervention in it. Such an intellectual intervention was crucial for Mannheim as a means of “re-contextualizing and thus reinterpreting achievements already recorded, as well as inspiring new ones” (Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984, 35).⁶⁴ Influenced by Lukács,

⁶³ Mannheim’s later work is also engaged in explicitly diagnostic projects. See, for instance, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (1940) and *Diagnosis of our Time* (1944). Indeed, Kettler, Meja, and Stehr refer to Mannheim’s broader approach as “diagnostic sociology.”

⁶⁴ My discussion of Karl Mannheim’ elaboration of the sociology of knowledge as a diagnostic tool draws largely from the discussion in David Kettler, Volker Meja and Nico Stehr’s *Karl Mannheim* (1984). Mannheim’s *Ideology and Utopia* has been extensively studied, particularly as a methodological text on the

Mannheim espoused an interest in articulating his current situation as one of a crisis of culture, within which there was a possibility for renewal and transformation. For him, as for Lukács, it was apparent that the old cultural contents were stale and irrelevant, and the crisis of this stagnation could be viewed historically as a time for possible “radical renewal” (39). Yet, while Mannheim was interested in Lukács’ argument in *History and Class Consciousness*, he was never convinced by its revolutionary aims (38), as will be discussed in more detail below.

Mannheim also sought to distinguish his own thought from Max Weber’s disillusionment. Contra Weber, another of Mannheim’s influences, Mannheim believed that disillusionment, or disenchantment, could be overcome through “faith and hope and work yet to be done” (Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984, 46). In particular, though, this overcoming of disillusionment in the form of renewal through crisis would take place through the energies of a new generation of thinkers with whom Mannheim identified. In *Ideology and Utopia* Mannheim diagnosed the question of crisis as productive, as enabling the emergence of consciousness through discussion among key social voices, and thus facilitating context-appropriate social action. The course of historically conscious political processes, Mannheim argued, had a great deal to do with people’s perceptions and attitudes toward them.

For Mannheim, a “wrong” attitude would bring about the pathologies of his time, which, to some, appear irrecoverable. As Kettler, Meja, and Stehr put it,

[w]here a false, overly intellectualistic attitude sees only ‘decline’, Mannheim concludes, it may well be that ‘the new human being’ is

sociology of knowledge approach. It has not been studied extensively as a political text, or with reference to its political implications, or through a particular emphasis on the question of diagnosis. For some exceptions, see, for instance, Connolly 1967, Heeren 1971, Goldman 1994, Lowy 2017, and David Kettler and Volker Meja’s broader projects on Mannheim (Kettler, Loader and Meja 2008; Kettler 1967; Kettler and Meja 1988; Kettler and Loader 2004). I will work with these discussions of Mannheim’s thought in later sections of this chapter.

painfully emerging, by means of innumerable ‘small, exhausting struggles’ (Mannheim 1952, 93, qtd. in Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984, 93).

Thus, for Mannheim, the diagnosis of the crisis is dependent on a question of generational perspective, one that enables the emergence of a new consciousness, a new form of subjectivity, and perhaps, a “new human being” through the practices that emerge from the diagnosis of the crisis. In this reading, then, we hear the echoes of Foucault’s hopes for the emergence of a new episteme upon the recognition of the death of man, the awakening from the anthropological sleep. However, as I have noted at the end of the previous chapter, over fifty years since Foucault’s writing, his prognosis has not come to pass, even given his own retooling in the turn to ethics. Similarly, for Mannheim, the emergence of the new human being, whereby the possibility of a renewed consciousness, an overcoming of relativism by a new generation, enables the change that is made much more difficult by Foucault’s diagnosis.

The crisis Mannheim diagnoses is one of political ideology, where the knowledge espoused by particular groups is put into doubt by the allure of relativism and social particularism. The uncertainty bred by the crisis of knowledge further engenders “violence and passivity in place of political action” (Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984, 92). To engage this problematic in the manner of a sociology of knowledge, Mannheim takes up what William Connolly has called a “‘general,’ ‘total’ and ‘non-evaluative’ conception of ideology” which emphasizes that all ideas – social and political – are driven by the social values of the age and the thinker, and relative to the situation from which the thought emerges. Mannheim’s understanding of ideology does not aim to demonstrate the validity of any one particular ideological perspective (indeed, Mannheim prefers the term “perspective” to the Marxism-inflected “ideology,” and develops it as distinct from ideology) but to view ideologies as partial views of politics, a recognition

he hopes may “prepare investigators of whatever orientation to construct more responsible and useful political interpretations” (Connolly 1967, 59). For instance, the three main historical ideological types Mannheim identifies – liberalism, conservatism and socialism – are identified with a specific class (liberalism is identified with the capitalist bourgeoisie, for example) and undergo changes along with the classes and generations with which they are identified. Significantly, each ideology is, for Mannheim, a way of seeing the world, and a kind of “design” of the world. Mannheim describes ideologies as “styles of thinking,” “a distinctive complex of responses to the basic issues which systematic philosophy has identified as constitutive of human consciousness, such as conceptions of time and space, the structure of reality, human agency, and knowledge itself” (Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984, 55-6). In this way, one’s ideological orientation is both deeply linked to one’s understanding of one’s age, and one’s political subjectivity. Yet, Mannheim notes that such styles of thinking cannot be simply linked to specific group “interests” and that they must be understood in relation to their historical development and based on the relationship between knowledge and action (1981, 61), rather than any group’s particular political interests. (In this, his position is distinct from those of Gramsci and Lukács). In this way, the sociology of knowledge links questions of structure and questions of action, questions of epistemology and questions of subjectivity.

Mannheim actively takes up the concepts of ‘crisis’ and ‘situation’ as key to the sociology of knowledge, describing the aim of the sociology of knowledge to be an “organon for a science of politics... [and] to provide a ‘situation-report’ on the crisis” (Mannheim 1952, 93, qtd. in Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984, 93). For Mannheim, viewing a crisis as a situation is a way to locate it as a historical moment and establish its

productive possibilities. As Kettler, Meja and Stehr put it, for Mannheim in *Ideology and Utopia*, “the crisis furthers the actualization of consciousness” through the debates it fosters between a new generation of newly conscious intellectuals, whose political and social consciousness enables the emergence, or recovery, of the knowledge needed to overcome the present crisis (39). This, Mannheim argues, enables an awareness of the function of ideology as social knowledge, and further, an understanding of how ideology is located within a historical moment (Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984, 103).

For Mannheim, the diagnostic utility of the category of the crisis allows for both temporalizing and subjective possibilities. Sociology of knowledge, which, as described above, Mannheim develops as the classificatory methodology for diagnosing his own time and the social relations therein, works as a mode of understanding the historical moment and creating categories through which a future can be imagined. Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge is thus read as part of a broader epistemological system through which “the thinker... [can] grasp the intellectual situation of his own time” (Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984, 33), and one that is rooted in the classification of knowledge and ways of knowing (34). Because sociology of knowledge is the means through which the new epistemological system is emerging, Mannheim argues, it must express the views of the intellectuals who are bringing it into being (58).⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Here emerges the metatheoretical question of the ideological orientation of sociology of knowledge itself, as located in a class of intellectuals. On this, Kettler, Meja and Stehr note that Mannheim acknowledges this difficulty, among others, by noting that the deliberation on the status of ideologies undertaken by intellectuals is located on “a level above brute conflict,” where intellectuals are able to debate “in the language of the educated, notwithstanding their differing ideological affiliations” (1984, 58). These deliberations are particularly significant in a time of ideological polarization. As will be discussed in the following section of this chapter, Mannheim is able to separate intellectuals as practitioners of the sociology of knowledge, from ideological orientations, by suggesting that intellectuals are not part of any particular class, but can emerge from many classes and thus many possible ideological orientations. He thus refers to an intellectual “stratum” rather than an intellectual “class.” For a broader discussion of the role of intellectuals in questions of the expression and explanation of dissent, see Introduction chapter of this dissertation.

In sociology of knowledge, the interpretation of a historical situation is enabled by the discussion of the status of the ideologies, and understood in the context of a kind of synthesis gained through the interpretation (57). Mannheim is influenced by neo-Kantian and phenomenological thought, rather than the explicitly Marxist ideas of many of his influences, in building his position on the question of a dialectical synthesis of differences in forms of knowledge.⁶⁶ This process of synthesis is not, however, an all-encompassing vision that is constructed or imposed, but one that *emerges* from intellectual discourse, and aims to overcome the “crisis of orientation” of the time, through that discourse (34). Here, again, it is the role of the intellectual class to work towards a synthesis of different ideological perspectives, to imagine a future political life that is more complex than that promised by any of the existing ideological alternatives, because it is grounded “in a world more complex, irrational, and activist than that which liberalism projects” (Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984, 60). Here, Mannheim neither places faith in Marxist revolutions, nor espouses a Romantic fear of a rationalization of the world; rather, again, he centers the question of a synthesis of perspectives enacted by intellectuals who are not devoid of an understanding of class conflict, nor abstracted from the significance of “emotion, unpredictability, novelty, and creativity” (1984, 101).⁶⁷ In

⁶⁶ Mannheim does, however, acknowledge that sociology of knowledge and its key concepts emerge from Marx’s theory of ideology, which he connects more specifically to the proletarian socialist ideology identified by the sociology of knowledge. In particular, Mannheim derives his concept of ideology from that described by Marx, though he does find Marx’s connection between class and knowledge to be overly simplified and notes that Marx’s concepts and processes change when they become part of the sociology of knowledge (See Mannheim 1979, 49-67; Connolly 1967, 56-59). For instance, the universalism and rationalism associated with the capitalist bourgeoisie (or the liberal ideology) cannot be viewed as dominating sociology of knowledge because sociology of knowledge emphasizes the historically bound nature of social knowledge as well as the residue of volition and choice in all understanding” (Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984, 58). Mannheim’s distinction from Lukács and Gramsci, and in particular his later further divergence from Marxist-inspired thought, can be linked to his biography, in his wartime move to the United Kingdom, and work in the British sociological milieu. See Kettler, Meja and Stehr 1984, particularly Chapters 3 and 4.

⁶⁷ Mannheim has been criticized for not offering an adequately developed explication of how a synthesis or resolution of ideological disputes may be instantiated. That is to say that while Mannheim offers an assertion of

this sense, then, Mannheim does not fall into the overly-simplified binary distinctions claimed by those seeking to juxtapose Enlightenment and Romantic approaches to the diagnosis of the times and its prognosis.

As with most forms of classification, Mannheim's sociology of knowledge does, however, aim for a kind of grounding, a set of pre-suppositions, methods and concepts through which an understanding can be forged. What is significant for my interests, however, is the way in which Mannheim's epistemological grounding explicitly emerges from a diagnostic need to examine the present in order to imagine different future possibilities.⁶⁸ Mannheim cautions that "knowledge is distorted and ideological when it fails to take account of the new realities applying to a situation, and when it attempts to conceal them by thinking of them in categories which are inappropriate" (1979, 86). Here, then, Mannheim clearly notes the significance of diagnosis and the classificatory impetus of the sociology of knowledge in reforming (or re-forming) structures of knowledge given present circumstances, and the dangers in not doing so, a key insight I share in writing this dissertation project. Mannheim attempts to "gain a kind of possession of the matter before us which allows us to orient ourselves in relation to it and to master what we have gained" (Mannheim 1964, 193 qtd. in Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984, 50). Diagnosis thus allows for an "orientation" on the problem through a set of reference points – in Mannheim's case, the reference points of the methodology and epistemology of the sociology of knowledge, the subject position of the intellectual stratum, and the aim of the synthesis of ideologies, which will be each discussed in more detail in the next sections of this chapter. In Mannheim's conception of a sociology of

the possibility of such an approach, he does not present any suggestions of how it may take place. See, for instance, Connolly 1967, 73-90.

⁶⁸ See Hobbes' nominalism for the exemplary case of this type of epistemological work, discussed briefly in Chapter One.

knowledge, the orientation provided through knowledge, through a classification of the situation, is connected to the political sphere, “where competing social visions grounded in different social designs struggle with one another in the attempt to bring the future into being.” Indeed, the sociologist of knowledge, “is able to diagnose his time,” an action which forms “the intellectual means for effective political action” (1984, 57). Through the formation of an epistemological synthesis, then, intellectuals not only diagnose and describe but also “chang[e] the structure of the political field” (61). This diagnosis, as with those described by Gramsci and Lukács, above, not only connects epistemology and politics, knowledge of the present – and of history, as I will discuss below – and the possibility of transformative political futures, but also connects these to a shifting understanding of the subject who enacts the diagnosis and the object of change, and, indeed, the relationship between subject and object.

Classifying the subject of dissent

If the diagnoses of the times described in the previous section are indeed a form of classification that relies upon an understanding of the relationship between forms of knowledge, forms of politics and forms of change, this classification requires a fundamental re-thinking of the subject and object of change. Indeed, the crises diagnosed by Gramsci, Lukács, and Mannheim are a variation of those described in the previous chapter and diagnosed by Foucault as the “death of man”: they are crises of subjectivity. Thus, to articulate a theory of political transformation through practices and understandings of dissent appears to require articulating a theory of the subject. For the thinkers discussed here, and in the two significant threads in the history of Western philosophy upon which they draw – those associated with Kant and Hegel – this requires

a specific emphasis on questions of consciousness and questions of history, and thus the subject of history.

Further, for each of Gramsci, Lukács, and Mannheim, a theory of subjectivity hinges on a *collective* subject in the form of a particular social group, class or stratum, as the subject of dissent, or the enabler of political transformation. Their understandings of the collective subject are broad and include, to put it somewhat crudely, the working class (Lukács), intellectuals facilitating the emergence of the existing ideals of the working class (Gramsci), or intellectuals as a stratum understood as not encompassed by the class system (Mannheim). Through their theories of subjectivity, each of these thinkers is also interested in articulating a historically grounded theory of freedom, associated to various degrees with questions of determinism and necessity. For instance, as will be discussed in more detail below, Piccone notes that “Gramsci’s Marxian method boils down to sociohistorically grounded political activity faithful to an emancipatory teleology but not reducible to any preconstituted set of procedures” (1983, 179). By contrast, Lukács’ emphasis on reification prompted a more idealist response than that offered by Gramsci, and one that, as the below will elaborate, enabled the emergence of “a totally dereified identity of subject and object as the normative whole promised by socialism” (Jay 1986, 171). For Mannheim, a subject position is not grounded in a particular class, but rather in the desire to consolidate diverse political perspectives and worldviews, or ideologies. This consolidation, or synthesis, is for Mannheim possible through the distinct position of intellectuals in society. Thus, as this section will aim to show, for Gramsci, Lukács, and, in a different way, Mannheim, re-thinking subjectivity is a crucial aspect of their theorizations of dissent, revolutionary change, or political transformation. Responding to the economic determinism of both the orthodox Marxist and positivist thought of their

time, these thinkers seek to articulate a theory of the subject in history that takes into account not only economic forces, but also the significance of ideas and common understandings to possibilities for political transformation. In so doing, these thinkers emphasize human action and understanding – questions of agency and epistemology – as key to questions of dissent.

As this chapter has argued, Gramsci's approach is an epistemological project of re-conceptualizing, or re-classifying, understandings of the subject in history and possible subjective action. Peter Thomas has pointed out that in Gramsci's writing, the concept of the subject, as connected to modernity's associations with knowledge and rationality, self-consciousness and introspection, does not appear as such (the word subject appears fifteen times in over two thousand pages of text); rather, Gramsci uses the older category of the “person” (or *la persona*), which cannot be so easily assimilated to the category of the modern knowing subject (Thomas 2009, 396-7).⁶⁹ This theory of the subject foregrounds knowledge as a practice, rather than as passive reflection (Jackson 2018, 139). As Thomas puts it, the reformulation into the category of the person “can be regarded as Gramsci's ‘anti-subjectivist’ historicist explanation of the category of the subject” (Thomas 2009, 396-397).⁷⁰

Gramsci's philosophy of praxis, as a form of mediation between determinism and conscious human activity, thus requires a re-articulation of the modern relationship between subject and object, the emergence of which was described in the previous

⁶⁹ In this text, however, I retain the terms “subject” and “subjectivity” as indicative of these thinkers' immersion and implication in forms of politics and epistemology that are bound up with Euro-Western modernity and its categories.

⁷⁰ Thomas traces the category of the person, as described by Gramsci, from Kantian inheritances, focused on interiority and ‘consciousness’ – the ‘person as an end in itself,’ and Hobbesian inheritances, focused on exteriority, where each individual, as a person, has many social roles (2009, 397-8). Of course, the Hegelian formulation of the subject, which Gramsci reads through Croce, must be added to these, and can be viewed, in terms of questions of the interiority and exteriority of the category of the person Thomas highlights, as including aspects of both.

chapter. For Gramsci, praxis is the interaction between subject and object where, as Femia puts it, “[m]an is at once cause and effect, author and consequence of certain definite conditions” (1981, 127).⁷¹ Gramsci’s concern, however, is that the objectification of these conditions, in the form of positivism, or the economic determinism of orthodox forms of Marxism, precludes subjective agency. Indeed, Gramsci’s articulation of praxis aims “to develop a concept of Marxism equidistant from both idealism and positivism” (127). This is because Gramsci felt that orthodox Marxism had overlooked “the dialectical relationship between subject and object in the historical process” in Marx’s work (128), a view he shared with Lukács. For Gramsci, however, the subject is historically situated, and neither an abstract ideal Kantian category, nor a Hegelian “hypostatized ‘spirit’” (98).⁷² History is both a question of concrete structural conditions and our actions and, significantly, understandings of these conditions. Femia’s subjectivist reading of Gramsci notes that, for Gramsci, “[h]uman action transcends objective conditions through free creation; indeed, the objective world is no more than man’s ‘consciousness of the existence of these conditions’” (Femia 1981, 64, citing

⁷¹ For a deeper engagement with Gramsci’s articulation of the relationship between subjective and objective conditions, see Femia 1981, Chapter 3.

⁷² Gramsci’s understanding of the dialectical relationship between subjective and objective conditions makes him skeptical of the deterministic claims of scientific Marxism. For Gramsci, intelligibility, or human knowledge of the world and its orders, is not available independent of our understanding. The world turns ‘no legible face’ to us, as Foucault has put it. As Femia notes, echoing Foucault in *The Order of Things*, “[t]he world as we know it, in other words, is not cognitively innocent. What exists appears to human beings in a particular way and is by them classified, interpreted, categorized and described in a particular manner” (1981, 102). Thus, Gramsci develops a history and philosophy of science, Femia writes, where “science is a historical development, a movement in continuous development” which involves “a relation between man and reality,” and, as such, “scientific enterprise is inextricably intertwined with ideological warfare,” and is hence, a “superstructure” (Gramsci quoted in Femia 1981, 104). This does not mean, however, that Gramsci dismisses scientific knowledge as a tool of the bourgeoisie, as Lukács does (1971, 10-11). Rather, Gramsci views science as “emancipatory” because it “frees man from the fetters of old-fashioned metaphysics, thereby initiating ‘a new form of active union between man and nature’, a practical, non-fetishistic relationship, of which Marxism is the culmination” (Femia 1981, 112). As Piccone writes, “there is absolutely no fetishism of science in Gramsci” (Piccone 1983, 185).

Gramsci 1963, 223). In this sense, then, history is read as not detached from our understanding of it – the object of our contemplation, a history of concepts – but rather a history of the struggle of “groups to change that which exists in any given moment” (Gramsci cited in Femia 1981, 99), or, as Marx would have it, the history of class struggle. Gramsci’s distinction, here, it must be emphasized, is in the agency of those acting. Historical and material conditions matter, but so do actions, and, significantly for the present study, our understandings of those conditions as the basis of our actions, also matter a great deal.⁷³

As noted above, however, most crucial to understanding Gramsci’s re-articulation of a theory of subjectivity through praxis is the question of the subject as collective, and through this collectivity, the formation of a collective will. In the opening of the “Philosophy of Praxis” section of *The Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci writes that in order to reconsider the philosophy of history using a Marxist approach, philosophy must be universalized. By this Gramsci means that a Marxist philosophy is a “collective activity,” which involves “not only the dissemination of ideas from above but also the extension of critical intellectual activity, in close links with the political practice of the movement, among an ever-broadening section of the population” (1971 [1948], 321). From this statement, then, we can highlight several aspects of Gramsci’s thought. First, as noted above, Gramsci’s insistence is on the connection between “organized critical reflection

⁷³ It is also worth noting that for Gramsci language is a crucial site for both enabling and delimiting possible action, and hence, possibilities of freedom. As Renate Holub has argued, Gramsci understood that language was key to the maintenance of hegemony: “[l]anguage, in its form as a structure of values, and mediated by agents of the hegemonic class, can keep the subaltern social classes in check” (1992, 112). Yet, here, again, Gramsci is a thinker of contingency rather than necessity, who argues that, as with hegemony, the “invention of counter-hegemonies [to be discussed in the next section of this chapter] is in part contingent on the very structure of language itself” (112). Language is thus a key part of the emergence and transformation of consciousness through which Gramsci thinks subjectivity. For a more in-depth treatment of Gramsci’s attention to language, which is beyond the scope of my aim in this chapter, see Holub 1992, Chapter 5, where Holub offers a close reading of Gramsci on Dante.

on existing forms of thought and their relation to the actual world which produced them” (321), or the relationship between subjective and objective conditions. To understand the world, Gramsci suggests, is impossible without taking stock of ourselves as part of a collective and created by that collective: “[w]e are all conformists of some conformism or other, always man-in-the mass or collective man” (324). Gramsci argues that “knowing thyself” must be considered “as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory” (324).⁷⁴ This is the basis for agency, and, as such, for the formation of the collective will (Jackson 2018, 136). Thus, the *formation* of a collective will (and its transformation) comes from “a concrete analysis of the historical processes of life, seeking to avoid succumbing to a speculative notion of the economy as a ‘hidden god’” but rather, thinking of collective will in terms of the processes through which people actually live and act (Jackson 2018, 142; citing Gramsci 1971 [1948], 347).

Second, the opening of “The Philosophy of Praxis” highlights the relationship between intellectuals and the broader population, where Gramsci famously argues that all activity is intellectual activity and that, in this sense, “everyone is a philosopher” (323). The collective will, for Gramsci, is intellectuals’ elucidation of a theory that is grounded in the actually held views of a particular social group (Jackson 2018, 142; citing Gramsci 1971 [1948], 377). The transformation of popular consciousness, discussed below, requires the transformation of particular social groups, which is also facilitated by the

⁷⁴ For a discussion of the relationship between the individual and the collective subject in Gramsci, see Jackson 2018, 143-147. As Jackson notes, Gramsci emphasized the necessity of transforming the “external world” in order to “develop oneself” (Jackson 2018, 144; *PN* 360). In this sense, for Gramsci, a “man” is “a series of active relationships (a process) in which individuality, though perhaps the most important, is not, however, the only element to be taken in to account” (Gramsci 1971 [1948], 352).

“intellectual strata,”⁷⁵ through whom the emergence of subjectivity as such was “a key element,” and who must “play a vital role in raising the masses from a passive condition and enabling their more or less coherent beliefs to become an effective material force” (Jackson 2018, 152, n22).⁷⁶

As I have been alluding to thus far, political transformation through praxis, entailing the transformation of conceptions of the world, and through them social relations and the articulation of a new form of subjectivity, takes place through the emergence of, or coming to, a “popular consciousness” (Gramsci 1971 [1948], 424). Here, it is important to note that in Gramsci’s work, unlike in that of Lukács, there is no conceptualization of “false consciousness, alienation, or reification” (Piccone 1983, 188). Yet, Gramsci still viewed alienation as a problem (188) of a lack of awareness of historical conditions on the part of most people, and thus a lack of autonomy. In this sense, Jackson emphasizes the *pre-intentional* character of subjectivity for Gramsci, “where the greater part of subjects are not *mobilised*, but *defined* (in their subjectivity, in their individual and collective way of being) by ideology” (Jackson 2018, 137, citing

⁷⁵ On the relationship between intellectuals and ‘the masses’ in the emergence of consciousness, it is worth mentioning Gramsci’s much cited claim that “[t]he popular element ‘feels’ but does not always know or understand; the intellectual element ‘knows’ but does not always understand and in particular does not always feel” (1971 [1948], 418). Piccone reads this not as a deficiency on either part, in particular given that, as noted above, Gramsci does not ultimately make a clear distinction between intellectuals and workers, intellectual and physical work. Rather, this statement is a claim towards the mutual implication of intellectuals and ‘the people’: “[T]he intellectual’s error consists in believing that one can know without understanding and even more without feeling and being impassioned (not only for knowledge in itself but also for the object of knowledge): in other words that the intellectual can be an intellectual (and not a pure pedant) if distinct and separate from the people-nation, that is without feeling the elementary passions of the people, understanding them and therefore explaining and justifying them in the particular historical situation and connecting them dialectically to the laws of history and to a superior conception of the world, scientifically and coherently elaborated – ie knowledge” (Piccone 1983, 194 citing Gramsci 1971 [1948], 418).

⁷⁶ Gramsci also emphasizes the role of the revolutionary party in facilitating political transformation, which is beyond the scope of this text as emphasizing subjectivity and questions of knowledge and classification in thinking about dissent. See Gramsci 1971, particularly 210-219 and Femia 1981, Ch. 4. I will briefly discuss the role of the party vis-à-vis the question of totality in the next section.

Liguori 2015 [2006], 89). What this means is that ideological beliefs – or conceptions of the world – create subjective perspectives or beliefs. Gramsci's perspective is very similar here to Mannheim's views on the effects of ideology. Gramsci takes the effects of ideology – which can be viewed as the significance of the connection between epistemology and politics in his thought – on subjectivity seriously as constituting and embodying popular beliefs and the possibility of their transformation (Jackson 2018, 137). Liguori notes that, for Gramsci, ideology is both a “conception of the world” and “a site of constitution of collective subjectivity [which] in reality concerns all ‘social groups’, because around this revolves the ‘war of position’ and struggle for hegemony with which all society is permeated” (Liguori 2015 [2006], 75). This is then, like with Mannheim, a *positive* theory of ideology, one where ideology functions as an understanding of the world rather than in the negative sense of a distortion or false sense of the world, or the question of a ‘false consciousness’.

For Gramsci, this articulation of subjectivity through popular consciousness, and with an emphasis on particular kinds of understandings of the world reflects an activist conception of history and subjectivity as co-implicated (Femia 1981; Sztompka 1991;). Thus Gramsci's critique of positivism and determinism are linked to his hopes for political change, where, as Femia notes, “Gramsci argued that socialists should fight for *ideals* rather than concrete proposals, the main ideal being ‘*the opportunity for all citizens to realize an integral human personality*’” (1981, 89, emphasis in original). The key revolutionary moment, for Gramsci, is when “a new order of values” (89) prevails. In this sense, then, “class struggle must be waged primarily on the level of ideas,” which calls for more varied and creative political action (89). Gramsci's descriptions of the specificity of this action are beyond the scope of this chapter, but Gramsci's

understanding of the new in relation to “new values” is significant for my argument in the overall study, and, particularly, for the next chapter. While Gramsci was interested in the revolutionary political possibilities of a “new culture” (Gramsci 1971[1948], 424) in “something qualitatively new, hitherto prefigured only in thought and expressed as negativity” (Piccone 1983, 2), this ultimately takes the shape of a new state – the collective subject become state. The new collective subject, if it is to become truly hegemonic, must “become the State” (Liguori 2015 [2005], 9), thus linking the holist theory of hegemony to a statism, a link that will be discussed in the final section of this chapter. As Piccone points out, here, “Gramsci returns to a Hegelian notion of the state seen as the highest expression of civil society rather than as a mere tool of class domination, as in the orthodox Marxist tradition” (192). What is interesting here, as I will discuss in the final section of this chapter, is that while Gramsci’s diagnosis and discussion of subjectivity affirms the significance of the *form* of the new itself in thinking and enacting political transformation, and a crucial affirmation of the contingency of the *content* of the new, he encloses this (or any) new form or content into the form of the state as a kind of necessary totalization. Collective consciousness, and the collective subject, then, for Gramsci, as for Lukács, who I will turn to shortly, appears to be necessarily totalizing.

As outlined in the previous section, Lukács’ diagnosis of reification assists him in articulating an understanding of the movement of history, the subject in history, and the relationship between the subject and object of knowledge. Importantly, the theory of reification also includes its own prescription of the overcoming of reification through the emergence of a new form of subjectivity. This prescription has some affinities, and some key differences from, that provided by Gramsci in highlighting questions of knowledge

and consciousness of a particular philosophy of history. While, as noted above, Gramsci's thought emphasizes contingency in the movement of history, Lukács believed that there was an "inner logic of the movement of human society" (1971 [1923], 15), which could be uncovered using our reasoning. As Jay puts it, for Lukács, "the past, present and future were all to be understood as moments in a coherent and meaningful process of emancipation" (1986, 106). This process of emancipation, as I will discuss below, involves bringing together the subject and object of history in the form of the proletariat as collective subject-object, and, in this way, also restoring the "antinomies of bourgeois thought" through the position of the proletariat as the universal "standpoint."

The moment of consciousness is crucial to the overcoming of reification, and, as for Gramsci, is also a question of revolution for Lukács (Breines 1972, 67). As described above, the condition of reification is where there is a mere illusion of subjectivity for the bourgeoisie, and where the worker is objectified, with his subjectivity consisting entirely of "contemplation" of his alienation (Arato 1972, 33). This situation deepens over time and, as Lukács puts it, "sinks more deeply, more fatefully and more definitively into the consciousness of man" (1971 [1923], 93). The structure of reification thus appears as the reason of the capitalist world, as modern rationality, at the cost of human activity, or praxis, which, for Lukács, as for Gramsci, involves philosophy as well as other types of work. Thus, praxis, in Lukács' thought, also involves revolutionary praxis and revolutionary consciousness, which emerges as, and as a condition for, the overcoming of reification (Arato 1972, 44). Consciousness of the structure of reification, again, comes through the worker recognizing himself as "*the subject... of the economic process*" (Arato 1972, 61), and of the proletariat as a class, thus transforming both himself and

subject-object relations. Thus, again, revolutionary consciousness is both a political and an epistemological project.

Key to Lukács' project is a rearticulation of the relationship between subject and object. As discussed in an earlier section of this chapter, the situation of reification produces the objectification of social processes and both the stultification of historical movement – in the form of the crisis of authority, the tragedy of culture and other diagnoses of the time – and the antinomies of modern thought, chief among them the separation between subject and object. For Lukács, it is this division that a revolutionary consciousness seeks to overcome, because it is this division that is central to the position of the working classes in history. The aim here is, after Marx's *Theses on Feurbach*, to transform the object from an object of contemplation into an object of praxis, an object of activity (Arato 1972, 45). For Lukács, it was thus crucial to move beyond the circularity of the Hegelian dialectic and toward “a subject-object relationship [that] transcends ethics and contemplation toward history” (45).

This is why, Arato argues, Lukács takes on Kant and the Kantian understanding of the *noumenon*, or ‘the thing in itself’ in relation to the problem of reification. It is in Kant’s articulation of the relationship to the ‘thing in itself’ that Lukács can formulate a new theory of the philosophy of praxis, of the relationship of subject and object. For Kant, the world of *noumena*, things in themselves, is mostly inaccessible to us as contemplating subjects. This situation, Lukács suggests, is connected to reification as “the problematic of human relations frozen into apparently impenetrable, unchangeable and opaque thing relations” (Arato 1972, 46). Lukács’ critique of Kantian ethics, Arato notes, is centered on the fact that, for Kant, a new subjectivity on the level of practice does not allow for “the ‘internal freedom’ of each individual subject to be externalized”

(48). Further, for Kant, as discussed in the previous chapter, the individual subject's experiences mean that the subject is split into the noumenon and phenomenon (49).

Lukács addresses this problematique through a reading of Kantian subjectivity vis-à-vis its destruction in the industrial factory, where every aspect of the worker's self-identity is alienated. The problem that Lukács identifies here is that the Kantian categories consider praxis on an individual, abstract level, and yet claim to "overcome the destruction of subjectivity" (Arato 1972, 49). For Lukács, praxis, and through it the possibility of subjective emancipation, cannot be abstract and considered only on the level of philosophy. Rather, "[f]reedom must be externalized to become substantial freedom: praxis must not remain indifferent toward the 'concrete material substratum of action'" (Arato 1972, 49 citing Lukács 1971 [1929], 126). Thus, the subject's relationship to his freedom must be externalized through common activity and in relation to the object of history, which is also the subject of history, himself.

The relationship to the 'thing in itself' was also the basis for Lukács' critique of Engels, who attempted an alternative solution to the 'thing in itself' problem. While Engels suggested that experiment and industry could be the basis for an overcoming of contemplation, for a transformation of the thing in itself into the 'thing for us', Lukács argues that this reformulation does not actually result in a change in the object, but only in our view of it. The object remains 'in itself'. As Arato puts it, praxis requires work on the subject-object *relationship*, and implies "an interrelationship with the immanent dynamic of the object of praxis... [and] fulfills its claim to be praxis only if it coincides with the object becoming subject, i.e., *for itself*" (172, 39). This *for itself* returns the subject-object relationship to history where, Lukács writes, "[h]istory is no longer an enigmatic flux *to which* men and things are subjected," but rather "the product (albeit the

unconscious one) of its own activity,” that is to say, the history of praxis (Lukács 1971[1929], 186). In this way, as will be discussed in the next section, Lukács links the subject-object historical relationship to the question of totality, where “*history is the history of the unceasing overthrow of the objective forms that shape the life of man*” (186, emphasis in original), which must be understood through a study of praxis rather than contemplation of the categories, “[f]or [history] contains nothing that does not lead back ultimately to men and to the relations between men” (186). The thing in itself thus becomes the *relationship* between subject and object, which, for Lukács, merges the subject and object into one, as I will discuss in more detail below.

For Lukács, it is through *revolutionary* praxis that subject and object are brought together. Praxis is praxis “only if it coincides with the object becoming subject, i.e., *for itself*” (Arato 1972, 39). According to Arato, Lukács comes to this conclusion through a reading of Hegel’s dialectics. If, for Hegel, the dialectic was a means of overcoming the ossification of antinomies like that of subject and object, then the “genesis” of the subject of this overcoming must be found. However, as Arato puts it, “the genesis of the subject becomes concrete only if the substance that is the dynamic source of this genesis, the substance that will become the object of the subject, is uncovered” (1972, 50). For Hegel, it is *history* that is both subject and object in this way, where “[t]he historical process both produces and is produced by the subject” (50). For Lukács, however, to actually comprehend the dialectical unity of subject and object, there must be a standpoint, a “we” who is doing the comprehending, a “‘we’ which is the subject of history, that ‘we’ whose action is in fact history” (Arato 1972, 50, citing Lukács 1971 [1929], 145). This is what Jay refers to as “the partial relativism of the historical process in which collective values were posited by certain historical subjects” (1986, 110). The standpoint of the proletariat

is thus the basis for the overcoming of the antinomies of bourgeois thought for Lukács.⁷⁷

As I discuss below, the standpoint of the proletariat is the basis for the emergence of a new consciousness, the overcoming of reification that is directed towards a revolutionary future, and the consciousness of the proletariat and the subject-object of history, the ‘we’ that is the subject and object of history.

The dialectical unity of the subject-object can be turned into a *politics* of the identical subject-object of history that is the proletariat, a politics of the working class as the driver of historical change. Historical change is crucial for Lukács as the proletariat’s coming to consciousness is the emergence of the subject from “neo-romantic despair” or Weber’s ‘iron cage’ (Murphy 1985, 185). In particular, Lukács is interested in the emergence of a category of “unknown universal interest,” and the universalization of interest from the standpoint of the proletariat. Yet, as Arato points out, and I have discussed above, what Lukács has articulated in his linking of the dialectic to the proletariat as the subject-object of history is both diagnosis and theoretical prescription. A theoretical prescription, or “conceptual dialectic” is not in itself, Arato notes, revolutionary praxis: “[h]istorical praxis can replace conceptual mythology only if the dynamic of the historical process, in this case the hidden dynamic of reification, produces the *objective possibility* of this praxis” (Arato 1972, 52). This possibility is the question of the consciousness of the proletariat of the condition of reification, as discussed above.

The self-consciousness of the proletariat as the identical-subject object of history, as a form of revolutionary praxis, must emerge, Lukács emphasizes, at the right time. Lukács criticized idealist philosophers like Fichte for their ahistorical conception of the subject. Abstractions and transcendental values, as attempted by the neo-Kantians of

⁷⁷ Jay describes how Lukács addresses other antinomies of bourgeois thought, like freedom and necessity. See Jay 1986, 111.

Lukács' time, were not to be the response to the problems of the age (Jay 1986, 110). To situate the subject in history, to situate the subject *of* history, Lukács argues, requires an assessment of “which social groups, which classes, were practically active and which were not” (Jay 1986, 107). Over the course of history, to the point of Lukács’ context, no class could legitimately claim the position of the universal subject. The universal subject was the proletariat.⁷⁸ Lukács describes the process as follows:

Only when a historical situation has arisen in which a class must understand society if it is to assert itself; only when the fact that a class understands itself means that it understands society as a whole and when, in consequence, the class becomes both the subject and the object of knowledge; in short, only when these conditions are all satisfied will the unity of theory and practice, the precondition of the revolutionary function of the theory, become possible. *Such a situation has in fact arisen with the entry of the proletariat into history* (Lukács 1971 [1929], 2-3).

The timely emergence of the proletariat as acting object of history enables revolutionary praxis for Lukács. Significantly for the argument of this project, and particularly that made in Chapter Four, on contemporary attempts to rearticulate subjectivities through dissent, the proletariat is a *collective* historical subject that “recognizes itself in its objectification,” in reification (Jay 1986, 108), and in so doing sets in motion revolutionary praxis. As Jay points out, the proletariat as collective subject, and its identity with the object of history is an articulation of the theory of totality upon which Lukács’ framework rests (1986, 109). Thus, Lukács’ thinking here creates a classification that makes possible several key moves: first, the *subjectivation* of the working class contra their reification and *through* their consciousness of their condition, that is to say,

⁷⁸ Jay has summarized a number of the not-insignificant criticisms of this line of Lukács’ thought. Among these is the question of Lukács’ apparent reduction of subjectivity to consciousness. This problematic reduction is, however, by no means limited to Lukács. Indeed, as I discuss in Chapter Four, it is also reflected in the way the activities of protesters in the 2009-2013 wave of global protests have been characterized. Lukács’ conceptualization of subjectivity has also been criticized for his assumption that the proletariat could be “a fully unifiable class.” As Jay puts it, this assumption resulted in “a normative totality, a goal of complete constitutive subjectivity,” that merely negates reification in the abstract (Jay 1986, 115).

an epistemological formulation; second, the articulation of a combined subject and object, which enables a movement of history, or historical change through revolutionary praxis; and third, a consideration of this move as *necessary*, as part of the “inner logic of the movement of human society” (1971 [1923], 15), which in turn enabled the possibility of the coming together of human society in a totality.

While, unlike Gramsci and Lukács, Mannheim did not directly address the transformation of subjectivity through revolutionary practice, two aspects of his thought are relevant to my discussion here: his interest in rethinking the relationship between subject and object and his centralization of the role of intellectuals as a key collective actor in this project. Mannheim, as noted above, is interested not only in the methodological sociology of knowledge as a diagnostic tool, but rather in showing that political thought is knowledge, rather than ideologically framed opinions – this is his concern about the relationship between subjective experience and objective meaning. This problematique, framed through the narrative of ideology, is taken up in *Ideology and Utopia* as the basis for the framing of the intellectual stratum as the arbiters of the impasse between subjective and objective understanding. In this, Mannheim is similar to Lukács and Gramsci in approaching the Kantian problem of knowledge by empiricizing it, and placing intellectuals, rather than the proletariat (or the proletariat with some guidance from intellectuals), in the position of the subject of history.

Mannheim’s interest in the sociology of knowledge is to both clarify and bring together different ideological positions specifically and the “discrepancies between subjective understandings and accepted objective “world views”” (where world views are for Mannheim ideologies) (Kettler et al. 2008, 4). This problematique – of the difference between one’s lived experience and the meaning attributed to it through the given or

“officially sanctioned” ways of attributing understanding or explaining things – is a variation on Simmel’s “tragedy of culture” or Lukács’ theory of “alienation” (4), and, in both, the result of profound instability. Mannheim’s neo-Kantian formulation, discussed earlier in this chapter, shows a knowing subject, located in history, who can never fully understand his external experience, or the object of his experience. Hence, knowledge is only partial, significantly perspective- and context-driven (Remmeling 1971, 537). Further, there is no single, official way of determining meaning, which makes all classificatory systems insufficient for true knowledge, and results in contestation about the meaning of fundamental concepts (here, Weber’s influence is clear) (Kettler et al. 2008, 5). Grouping concepts based on points of view on them generates ideological perspectives or “world views,” but this returns us to the problem of experience and the meaning attributed to it. It is important to note, however, that this theorization is distinct from Lukács and Gramsci’s explicitly Marxist views. While Mannheim takes up the Marxist idea that ideologies express the views of a particular class, he rejects the view of Lukács and other Marxists that there is a particular social class that has a privileged perspective in shaping the next stage of history (5).

Mannheim suggests that this problematic in the status of knowledge is due to a shift from examining objects specifically (as in science, logic, exemplified, for instance, in the Classical episteme examined in the last chapter), to examining the subject itself, as in the questions of sociology and the human sciences. Finally, however, Mannheim suggests that sociology of knowledge is the move to examine knowledge at a time “when social forces are moving in a more collectivist direction and in which efforts to ground knowledge either in objects or in subjects alone are no longer viable” (Goldman 1994, 274n6). By contrast to Marxist thought, Mannheim posits the significance of the

“sociological person” as one who “feels his way through the intermeshing weave of the actual situation’... using sociology as the instrument for a new ‘reformation of life’” (Mannheim 1979 [1929] qtd. in Kettler et al. 2008, 168). The sociological person is further identified with a new generation of sociological thinkers or intellectuals in whom Mannheim places his trust for a future “synthesis” of the divisions of modern thought. As noted above, Mannheim’s diagnosis of the status of the present suggests that this new generation of thinkers is emerging from a difficult to classify age and, in becoming conscious of the novelty of their age, fostering a new understanding of the age, new relationships to each other, and, hence, a new subjectivity. This new generation of intellectuals takes on a “mediating role” between competing interests and ideological perspectives (Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984, 60).⁷⁹ Mannheim writes that both Enlightenment and Romantic thought emerged from what he called “free-floating” or socially unattached intellectuals, though some Enlightenment thinkers were still connected to the bourgeoisie (Heeren 1971, 3). By contrast, Romantic thinkers’ relative lack of social attachment meant that they often took jobs in government bureaucracies, which, as Heeren notes, gave them insight into the workings and structures of social and political life. In this way, as in Lukács and Gramsci’s understanding of class, however, intellectuals gain consciousness of themselves as a distinct group of knowledge creators who, by virtue of their internal diversity of activities and lesser involvement in economic production, contain within them “the interests of all social classes” (Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984, 69; Heeren 1971, 6). The aim of the intellectual group, and particularly a new generation of intellectuals, is thus to find “a total perspective” (Heeren 1971, 6), a

⁷⁹ It is important to emphasize that the discussion here is focused on Mannheim’s early thought in *Ideology and Utopia*. As Heeren notes, by the end of his life, Mannheim is less interested in the possibility of the intellectuals as fostering political synthesis. See Heeren 1971.

political synthesis. In this sense, Mannheim views intellectuals as “watchmen in what otherwise would be a pitch-black night” (Mannheim 1929, 160-1 qtd. in Heeren 1971, 7), and, while they are not necessarily viewed as a driver of history, for the Mannheim of *Ideology and Utopia*, they are key to his view of how the crisis of the present may be addressed through a fusion of possible perspectives.

Totalities: framing emancipation

The above discussion has examined how Gramsci, Lukács and Mannheim, three early twentieth century thinkers broadly influenced by both Marxian-Hegelian and neo-Kantian thought, diagnose the ambivalences of the time in which they lived through the question of crisis, hegemony, and reification and by offering methodological approaches through which to understand the times. These diagnoses center the ambivalent position of the subject, and the subject’s relationship to knowledge and role in history. Each thinker’s diagnosis suggests a prescription – through revolution, or synthesis – that would serve as a form of emancipation or resolution to the problem of the subject. These prescriptions, as the final section of this chapter will discuss, theorize the necessity of a totalization, universalization or a synthesis in social and political order and double down on the Hegelian impulses in these thinkers’ work, as well as a long-standing modern fascination with the concept and possibility of totality. The consequences of this move are a kind of closed system, whereby, to varying degrees, the question of emancipation signals a kind of final synthesis, or final set of subjective relations, as per Hegel and Marx.

The concept of totality has a long history in Western thought. Particularly in modern thought, totality has been associated with ideas about revolution or large scale political transformation. The positive idea of totality was central in the emergence of the

idea of a social totality, or society (Quijano 2007, 175). In his book on totality and Marxist thought, Martin Jay writes that totality has generally been associated with positive words like order, community and coherence, as distinguished from negative words like disorder, fragmentation, or alienation (Jay 1986, 21). As these words indicate, totality has been especially taken up in Marxist thought, which often equates totality “with a desirable goal that is yet to be achieved,” a normative goal (23). This goal is exemplified in the work of Lukács and Gramsci, who Jay identifies as particularly seeking totality in their thought as a means of restoring the vigour of Marx’s thought (80).

Jay argues that Gramsci is undeniably an advocate for a Marxist idea of totality, frequently using the word “organic” to refer to the course of history, the relations of certain intellectuals to their class, the connection of theory and practice and the integration of societies (1986, 153). Indeed, Gramsci was so committed to an understanding of totality that he went so far as to describe his own position as “totalitarian,” well into the 1930s when this word had been taken up by fascist ideologues (153). For instance, describing the role of intellectuals as unifying classes, Gramsci writes that “the parties are the elaborators of new and integral totalitarian *intelligencias* and the crucibles where the unification of theory and practice, understood as a real historical process, takes place” (1971 [1948], 335).⁸⁰

This understanding of the role of intellectuals as the unifying factor between theory and praxis also reflects Gramsci’s Marxist view that there is no transcendent realm outside of history. Rather, the philosophy of praxis is itself whole and contains all that is

⁸⁰ Yet, while Gramsci’s understanding of totalitarian here indicates a unification through history, his broader understanding of totality comes to coincide with Leninist politics, and has been criticized as such. See, for instance, Piccone 1983.

needed for a complete conception of the world (Jay 1983, 153). Unlike Marx and, arguably, Lukács, however, Gramsci's conception of history is as a progressive but not deterministic whole. In particular, Gramsci does not believe that the historical process is driven by the "objectification of a meta-subject" in the form of the proletariat (157). Rather, Gramsci is interested in a broader "cultural unification," where, rather than Lukács' collective subject and object of history in the form of the proletariat, Gramsci describes "an intersubjective totalization which is to be completed in the future, if at all" (159). For Gramsci, there is a necessity to create a unified community that shares cultural meanings, and, as such, his conception of totality is not wholly focused on economic grounds (159).

In this sense, while Gramsci is an adherent of totalization, he does not see totalization as ever final, and views revolution as constant, with a constant possibility for progress and improvement of society, individual growth and, especially, "newer and better harmonies" between parts of society (162; 171). In part, this is because Gramsci hopes for a kind of "linguistic consensus" that would be arrived at through a socialist hegemony – a shift to a new set of categories, or new forms of classification. Yet, Gramsci recognizes the difficulty of this, given "the inevitable metaphoricality of language," which would require the open-endedness of a constant discursive process (171). Thus, Gramsci's theorization of totality is one of an open totality, but one that requires, for him, a national context, in order to build cultural unity through language and shared discourse. Hegemony, as noted above, is for Gramsci not merely an economic question, but also a cultural question, and comes out of Italian idealism (Jay 1986, 164-5). Gramsci thus argues that there is a need for a linguistic and cultural consensus as a basis for socialism (171).

The creation of a counter-hegemony in this context is a difficult process which requires mediation and the coming to collective consciousness of the new unity (Holub 1991, 107; Piccone 1983, 162-3). This consciousness is not elaborated by intellectuals but is rather a mediation between different groups. This collective, totalizing consciousness ushers in a new age of socialist hegemony. Such a totality would not happen all at once, however, and would be prefigured by a counter-hegemony based on proletarian power, which emphasized political education (Jay 1986, 165). Again, the mediators, or educators, of this process would be intellectuals, “the vanguard of the coming linguistic and cultural community” (166). As mediators of a historical process toward a new socialist totality, intellectuals bridge between new and old.

Importantly, Gramsci’s famously difficult conception of the intellectual itself takes on both a number of highly specific meanings, but also a totalizing meaning. Intellectuals are the disseminators of values, and particularly the values of a changing social and political order (Holub 1992, 5), but Gramsci also argued that “all men are intellectuals” though not all fulfill the intellectual function in society (1979 [1948], 9). The mediating role of intellectuals is to consolidate their knowledge with the “passions” of the masses in order to avoid becoming a separate bloc (Jay 1986, 157). Gramsci’s hope was that the proletariat would create its own group of organic intellectuals, who would emerge from the proletariat as “internal mediator” of the revolution, rather than traditional intellectuals, who had become autonomous from their class (as in Marx and Engels, or in Mannheim’s understanding of intellectuals).

The process of totalization for Gramsci is the outcome of emerging from the crisis of interregnum, where a new culture and new socialist hegemony is the ultimate (though not completed) aim. This is a process undertaken through praxis itself, rather than

through reference to a transcendent unity of theory and praxis, located specifically within a national culture and language. This is, as Piccone puts it, the “self-constitution into a new state” (1983, 191-2). Thus, we see in Gramsci the conception of something new as a “return to a Hegelian conception of the state as the ideal of society” (191-2). The totality of the socialist hegemony is thus a form of the new that repeats the form of the state.

Lukács’ thinking on totality, through the overcoming of reification at the conceptual and empirical level, begins with his reading of Kant’s noumena and the problematic of the subject’s inability to “synthesize a rational totality” (Arato 1972, 47). For Lukács, Kant’s work is exemplary of “the bourgeoisie’s inability to transcend the dualism of its concrete existence and achieve a totalistic grasp of reality” (Jay 186, 44), based on Kant’s rejection of dialectics as a form of cognition. By contrast, Lukács contended that “what is crucial is that there should be an aspiration towards totality” (1971 [1923], 198, qtd. in Jay 1986, 23).⁸¹ As with Gramsci, Lukács argues that mediation is necessary to attain social wholes, and suggests that totalities are synthesized at different levels. Through his stress on totality, and contra Gramsci, Lukács argues that “the *real, objective* dynamic of history can be understood” (Arato 1972, 62-3). As discussed above, however, this objectivity is Lukács’ attempt to deal with the problematique of subjectivity. The mediation necessary to synthesize wholes takes place, for Lukács, as for Gramsci, on both the level of epistemology and of action – the two contribute to “a dynamic understanding of the whole... [where] [o]nly in this context, which sees the isolated facts of social life as aspects of the historical process and

⁸¹ Even though Lukács would later denounce significant sections of *History and Class Consciousness*, he continued to believe in the significance of the category of totality, as he expressed in the preface to the 1971 edition to the text: “[i]t is undoubtedly one of the great achievements of *History and Class Consciousness* to have reinstated the category of totality in the central position it had occupied throughout Marx’s works and from which it had been ousted by the ‘scientism’ of the social-democratic opportunists” (1971 [1923], xx).

integrates them in a *totality*, can knowledge of the facts hope to become knowledge of *reality*" (Jay 1986, 104-5).

Totality is what distinguishes Marxism from bourgeois thought for Lukács, in its emphasis on the whole rather than parts. In this emphasis, totality, which Marx adapted from Hegel, enables the possibility of not only proletarian revolution, but also a revolution in knowledge (Jay 1986, 104) – a shift in categories of understanding, as the discussion of Lukács' approach to Kant above indicates.

For Mannheim, as discussed in the previous section, the key issue of his time was a crisis of ideas, the resolution of which he theorized through a synthesis among ideological world views mediated by an intellectual strata that he viewed as unattached to any particular ideology. In this way, Mannheim sought the creation of an *epistemological* totality, when no such synthesis is possible in social reality (Goldman 1994, 272). Kettler, Meja and Stehr argue that the concept of "totality" is the central point of *Ideology and Utopia*, with the methodology of the sociology of knowledge seeking to provide a view of the whole ideological field, through the perspective of intellectuals (1984, 57).

Unlike for Lukács, however, for Mannheim totality is specifically a synthesis, rather than a coming to objective truth, where Mannheim's hope, again, is to posit a conceptual unity in the face of the societal fragmentation of his day. Mannheim's desire for synthesis is in this sense comparable to Gramsci's understanding of totality as mediated by an intellectual group. For Mannheim, intellectuals, with their internal diversity and lack of clear class position, work for synthesis where they mediate between perspectives to "cultivate a political life in which the 'next step' in the historically conditioned line of development can be taken with minimal loss to old achievements in culture and maximal enlistment of all social energies" (Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984,

60). However, while Mannheim notes that this kind of synthesis is reminiscent of the promises of liberal political ideals, Mannheim distinguishes his theory from liberalism by bringing in a conception of “dialectical interplay” between forces from Marxist thought (66). He doesn’t, however, identify one of these as the “real” and objectively true force that will consolidate society into universal history, but rather views forces as “complementary and in need of a synthesis that will incorporate elements of their diverse social wills and visions” (66). While Mannheim is deeply influenced by Lukács, he never accepts Lukács’ vision of Marxist thought as a kind of final synthesis, but rather aims toward “an integrative, total view of the socio-cultural world” (Kettler and Loader 2004, 157). Thus, Mannheim’s view of synthesis is of a “practical, provisional normalization of continuing oppositions rather than as a transcendent reconciliation of contradiction” (Kettler and Meja 1988, 623).

It is important to underscore that in this view, Mannheim sees synthesis through sociology of knowledge as something of a therapeutic – a total vision that brings together various ideological perspectives (Kettler et al. 2008, 6). Mannheim is interested in such an integration of perspectives as a means of creating a new totality for the present, in the face of the danger of the disappearance of ideals or “utopias” in his age. Synthesis between competing dualisms was an approach to this possibility of totality. This is, significantly, not only a question of competing ideas, at the level of thought, but a political question, where synthesis would have political consequences (Goldman 1994, 275). Yet, as Kettler, Meja and Stehr note, Mannheim failed to predict the synthesis emergent in the success of National Socialism, “which gave millions a sense of having regained orientation, and it effectively dissolved the ideological impasse” (Kettler, Meja, and Stehr 1984, 75).

The consequences of these theorizations are significant – while Gramsci, Lukács and Mannheim are keen observers and astute diagnosticians of their times and the need to consider political and epistemological questions together, to varying degrees, their prescriptions struggle with questions of continuing change and fall back into the familiar categories of Marx and Hegel, with a Leninist flavor. For Gramsci, as noted above, socialist hegemony is achieved through a return to a Hegelian conception of the state, where national culture and a strong authority are necessary to maintain the cohesion of the totality. For Lukács, the question of totality, as read through the proletariat, is, in effect, a totality that enables the end of history as the history of class struggle, a deterministic totality. For Mannheim, totality is not a Hegelian or Marxist finality, but rather the possibility of a synthesis out of chaotic diversity of views. Yet, as noted above, in attempting to focus on the therapeutic effects of epistemological synthesis, Mannheim failed to predict how these syntheses might not be bringing together utopias but mobilized politically to synthesize ideological grievances.

Conclusion

Reading the thought of Gramsci, Lukács, and Mannheim from the 1920s and early 1930s, as well as mid-century secondary literatures on this work, the similarities in diagnosis, process, conviction and emotional tone is striking. This is all the more the case as a century of upheavals and mass political transformations have passed in which their diagnoses, subjective hopes, and political aims have been repeated and yet unrealized. One possible response might be that these determined diagnoses, hopes and aims have been repeated (albeit with sometimes significant revisions). The purpose of this chapter was to show that these three thinkers have identified crucial categories for thinking dissent/political transformation. They are keyed into the significance of the politics of

classification for political transformation. However, in seeking to retain some sense of foundation through diagnosis, and emphases on subjectivity and totalization, they fail to seriously take into account the problem of the “Death of Man” as identified in the previous chapter. In identifying these as the crucial categories of their times, these thinkers (and others of their period) are perhaps the last to take a politics of classification seriously in this way. The contemporary thinkers with whom I am concerned are working and re-working many of the same categories, for a different time.

In a 2000 text that addresses the relationship between popular dissent and human agency, Roland Bleiker recognizes a paradox of both contemporary and historical theories of dissent, writing that they seek “certainty and systematic knowledge” and attempt to classify “underlying patterns that could explain, once and for all, the functioning of direct action in diverse historical and cultural settings.” However, he continues, this attempt at classifying possible political change has had the effect of creating a set of “universalized narrative[s]” that delineate “specific image[s] of dissent” (2000, 115). In this chapter, I have attempted to sketch out how, in the early part of the 20th century, despite close attention to the epistemological factors at play in diagnosing the times, and the possibilities of subjective transformation and political action, Gramsci, Lukács, and Mannheim’s prescriptions show the beginning of a crystallization of possible categories for understanding practices of dissent. It is through these categories, as I will show in the final three chapters of this dissertation, that commentators on the 2009-2013 waves of global protest seek to understand the events, while at the same time claiming the events’ novelty.

Chapter 3: The persistence of novelty: understanding protests and the present

It is one of the great functions of so-called modern philosophy ... to question itself about its own actuality.
– Michel Foucault, “What is Revolution?”

Introduction

In his indictment of contemporary economics systems and the failure to appear of promised futures, Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi offers a diagnosis of the tensions of a spatiotemporal present, writing that “[n]ever in our life have we faced a situation so charged with revolutionary opportunities. Never in our life have we been so impotent. Never have intellectuals and militants been so silent, so unable to find a way to show a new possible direction” (2011, 175). The many protests that have erupted around the globe since 2009 (from Gezi Park, to Zuccotti Park, to Sao Paolo and Sofia and Tahrir Square) engage these problems on multiple dimensions. While, as Berardi suggests, the present appears a moment of opportunities, since his writing, questions around the form of the present, have also emerged as myriad attempts to elucidate possibilities and directions. Indeed, as this chapter will discuss, intellectuals and activists are no longer silent. Whether these attempts, on the part of activists, intellectuals and also journalists, have been successful in finding “a way to show a new direction,” this chapter will argue, remains a complicated question. There is a kind of desire – voiced by participants, observers, and sympathetic commentators – for change, or more specifically, for something *new* through the protests. Understandings of the contemporary, the global, and the local – the spatiotemporal present – are changing vis-à-vis expressions of dissent, or so these commentaries begin to argue.⁸²

⁸² For example, Castells 2012, Mason 2013, Zizek 2011, 2013.

These dual contentions – of the novelty of contemporary forms and expressions of protest, and the simultaneous novelty of a spatiotemporal present – are the framing themes for this chapter. I engage metanarratives about protest – commentaries that seek to offer a diagnosis of the present by thinking through protest events – as a way of thinking about the limits and possibilities entangled in attempts to understand the contemporary as novel. The commentaries paint a tableau to help us see the events, part of our everyday practices of making the unfamiliar more familiar. They do the work of simultaneously articulating what Slavoj Zizek calls “a fluid feeling of unease and discontent that sustains and unites various specific demands,” relating this feeling to historical categories through which to understand protest, and formulating a desire for a future yet to come (Zizek 2013, 12).

The aim of this chapter, as of the dissertation project as a whole, is not, however, to suggest that prevailing commentaries on protests are incorrect, or perhaps even merely misguided. Rather, I read in these commentaries a hope and a desire that is not at all unfamiliar – a hope and a desire for novelty *in, of, and for* the present, through a diagnosis of the present that is itself very old and thoroughly modern. Yet, it is crucial to underline that the novelty so deeply desired appears to be novelty in a *particularly modern form*. The form of novelty we know and desire is constitutively linked to modern aspirations for knowledge and emancipation. This is a novelty which names itself – classifies itself – as novel and seeks novelty. This is the novelty encapsulated in Kant’s *Sapere Aude*.

In thinking through the way hopes and desires for novelty are translated into familiar categories, I thus argue that there are deeper habits of thought at play – whose significance to contemporary political life must be taken more seriously. The

commentaries suggest that there is a problem of politics in protests that continue to be framed through a set of familiar categories and described through a familiar set of approaches. The over-arching desire that runs through the commentaries is understanding in the form of classification: to understand is, in many cases, to classify. Yet do we need novel methods to think about what we consider to be novel forms of dissent? This chapter claims that it is necessary to examine practices of classification and their relation to possible ways of knowing and the knowable and, in turn, the way these epistemological claims are located in various claims to novelty. To do this, I turn primarily to Michel Foucault's engagements with the question of the Enlightenment, because the question of the present as a question of novelty expressed through contemporary protests is often read through the animating questions of the Enlightenment.⁸³ The question of the diagnosis, or the classification, of the novelty of the present – the aim to understand the present – is a key modern question, perhaps *the* modern question. This question engages in openings to novel forms of thought and action, but these novel forms of thought are always possible only within particular political and epistemological limits (which effectively function as ontological limits).

In the chapter's first section, I offer an empirical overview – a kind of strategic literature review – of several commentators' diagnoses and explanations of the 2009–2013 protests as novel. In so doing, I perform my own classification, noting that commentators' diagnoses are oriented towards descriptions of the experience of shared emotions, networked communications and international interconnections, horizontal political relations, and the emergence of novel forms of subjectivity. These are by no

⁸³See, especially, Castells 2012, Mason 2013a. I treat the diagnosis of the present through Marxian-Hegelian-influenced approaches in the previous chapter. It must be noted, however, that the approaches taken by Lukács, Gramsci and Mannheim discussed in the previous chapter retain the understanding of and desire for novelty and political transformation associated with Enlightenment thought, and particularly with the thought of Kant.

means the only points of affinity through which many of these protests have been interpreted, but they are, for my purposes here, the ones through which the diagnosis of novelty has most often been made.

In the next section, I suggest that it is the forms of explanation – which I describe as practices of classification – that must be problematized in order to think seriously about questions of change and dissent today. As I will explain in later parts of this chapter, the practice of classification gets at the heart of the ambivalent relationship between epistemology (as the desire to understand) and change (as the desire for novelty) brought into sharp relief by practices of dissent. The commentators suggest that not only are the forms of protests new, they are also indicative of a broader novelty in space and time, a new *ethos*, or mood, that emerges in many intersecting ways in diverse local contexts. The *ethos* thus diagnosed is, however, encapsulated in the broader diagnosis of and desire for a new form of spatiotemporal present that, as I will discuss below, is deeply intertwined with the foundational questions of the Enlightenment and, indeed, the modern. That is to say that, while diagnoses proliferate, it is the *anticipation of and desire for* novelty, a change whose precise contents are in contention in these commentaries, that is decidedly modern, a replication of the ethos of modernity, which itself relies on continuous change.

Diagnoses of novelty in the 2009-2013 protests

A number of diagnoses of novelty in the recent wave of protests – whether commentators celebrate, dismiss, or address the events with trepidation – have been framed and explained by a synthesis of shared emotion among participants, whether through reference to a “global mood” (Rachman 2011b), or questions of outrage, as

protesters in Athens' Syntagma Square referred to themselves as '*aganaktismenoi*' ('the Outraged') or indignation, as in the Spanish *indignado/as*, or Stephane Hessel's *Indignez-Vous* (2010).⁸⁴ Commentators – whether writing for popular or scholarly audiences or some combination thereof – have focused on both the identification of indignation or anger as a source for popular revolt, and have expanded this identification into broader narratives about shared emotions among protestors. The editors of a special monograph issue of *Current Sociology*, entitled "From indignation to occupation: A new wave of global mobilization" (2013), identify what they call the "occupy movements" (those events that have involved in large part the physical occupation of space, sometimes also called 'the movements of the squares'), as "diverse manifestations of a new international cycle of contention" (2013, 377), connected in various ways by shared expressions of emotion.⁸⁵ In so doing, the contributions to the issue, in various ways, seek to posit a new set of categories – a new series of classifications – through which to understand practices of dissent.

Manuel Castells' *Networks of Outrage and Hope* (2012; revised in 2015 to address the 2013 wave of protests) both describes an emotional narrative that, he suggests, is common to all of the recent protests, and a desire for a new classification through the emotional trajectory of the protest. Castells offers a story of the emergence of protests through an impetus or spark driven by rage, that, when brought together with others in a community of dissent, foments into hope. Similarly, Paul Mason draws on

⁸⁴ For sociological readings of the affective narratives of the Greek and Spanish protests, see Perugorria and Tejerina 2013, and Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013, respectively.

⁸⁵ See Benski and Langman 2013, in the abovementioned monograph issue of *Current Sociology*, for a brief exegesis on the history of the study of emotions in social movement theory. While located broadly within the framings of the contentious politics literatures associated with Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly (Tarrow 1998, 1995; Tilly and Tarrow 2015), the editors of this special issue seek to shift focus to questions of emotion in explaining protest, questions that are largely absent from the contentious politics literatures (Benski and Langman 2013, 536).

emotional narratives to explain the trajectories driving the protests he describes. Mason offers a narrative about the collective disillusionment of young middle class and working people, and is himself drawn into the shared feeling of the events, reporting in the breathless tone that accompanies many commentaries on the protests written while the events are taking place. Commentators also emphasize that there are affirmative emotions associated with the protests, what some have called a shift from *reflexive* emotions (like outrage and indignation) to *affective* ones, for instance, the “joy, efficacy and empowerment” that emerged through protestors’ encounters with each other in public space (Perugorria and Tejerina 2013, 424). These narratives also function as classifications through which to apprehend the meaning of the events. For instance, Benski and Langman note that “emotions are amorphous categories,” which shift and merge into each other (2013, 530), and link the processes through which shared emotions emergent in protest movements shift to how, through “emotional liberation/detachment,” old emotional bonds are dissolved and new ones formed (534).

Benski and Langman’s analysis offers a particular distillation of the varied ways in which commentators have pointed to the significance of shared emotions to claims of novelty in the 2009-2013 wave of protests. Benski and Langman’s aim in foregrounding emotions in examining protests is to demonstrate the significance of emotions to *understanding* protests. In so doing, they create a “sociological typology” which isolates specific emotions as qualities through which protests may be understood and analyzed (2013, 531-2). Here, then, emotions are identified as characteristics that can be operationalized in a new analytical framework for understanding arguably new forms of protest. There is thus both a novelty of analysis and a specific kind of novelty of the event being claimed here – this novelty is in how, as Castells and others have put it, these

events are driven and sustained by participants' shared emotions, but it is also in the classification of the protests *as* events driven by emotions. This recourse to classification – particularly the classification of emotions – appears both counterintuitive (thinking emotions analytically) and obvious (inasmuch as classification is the most common modern form through which to seek understanding of the new). There is, however, a deeper theoretical issue which is worth mentioning here and which I will discuss in more detail in a later section. The first is that the analytic approach to emotion in protest – and particularly emotional responses to novel events – reflects an Enlightenment, and a particularly Kantian, understanding of protest or dissent. Benski and Langman's discussion echoes Kant's reflections on the significance of revolutionary events in "The Conflict of the Faculties" (1996). For Kant, the significance of revolutionary events is in their experiential effects. There is a question of a shared enthusiasm that is shared not only by those participating but also by those who have witnessed the events and, perhaps, those reflecting on them analytically. Further, this enthusiasm is directed towards human progress – as Foucault puts it, "[t]he enthusiasm for the Revolution is the sign, according to Kant, of humanity's moral predisposition" (2007, 91), a hope for political transformation, or, as Lyotard has read Kant here, a variation on the experience of the sublime (2009, 29).

The second form of novelty described in the commentaries is that around the use and ubiquity of networked communications in the protests. Much discussion around the diffusion and interlinking of protest events – their 'globality' – has been articulated through arguments around network theory and the significance of communications technology to the intensification and spread of protest events from online to physical

spaces.⁸⁶ The sociologist and public intellectual Zeynep Tufekci, in a recent study of the relationships between the use of digital networks and protest movements entitled *Twitter and Tear Gas* (2017), connects the way digital networks have influenced forms and practices of protest to longstanding discussions about how historical novelty has been facilitated by technological change.⁸⁷ The commentators suggest that these features of networked movements add up to “new forms of social movements” (Castells 2015, 221), which are different from earlier movements and “often operate with a different logic” (Tufekci 2017, xxiii). Even though commentators note that the particular events and the places in which they occurred are distinctive, they nonetheless suggest that they are linked by the networked connections and digital methods they employ. However, as I will explain in more detail below, these arguments in themselves – by enumerating issues like the distinctiveness of network building, the accelerated pace of political engagement, and movements’ autonomous capacities – in many ways reproduce a similar wave of commentaries that emerged in the late 1990s and diagnosed protests’ novelty in similar terms.⁸⁸

A further significant point of overlap in the turn of the 21st century diagnoses and those of the past five years is in discussions about the interconnections between movements (Graeber 2013; Perrugoria and Tejerina 2013; Castells 2012). Commentators

⁸⁶ For discussions of network theory and the “network society,” both broadly, and as they pertain to the protest events discussed here, see Castells (2009), and (2015 [2012]). Castells argues that networked social movements are indicative of the structure of what he has theorized as “the network society, the social structure of the Information Age” (2015, ix-x). Commentators have noted that the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle were the first large scale example of an “emerging, networked global movement” (Tufekci 2017, x). The literature on digital networks influence on protests and social movements is vast. For further examples, see Gerbaudo 2012, Tufekci 2017 and Shirky 2011.

⁸⁷ These commentators are, to an extent, aware and wary of falling into a technological determinism. For instance, while Tufekci is careful to note that Twitter or Facebook did not cause these events, she argues that “these technologies influence...and structure...possible outcomes of human action, but [do] so in complex ways and never as a single, omnipotent actor – neither [are they] weak, nor totally subject to human desires” (2017, 119).

⁸⁸ See, for instance, Barlow And Clark (2002), Mertes and Bello (2004), Dyer-Witheford (1999), Starr (2000), among many others.

have argued that the protests were indicative of an emerging cosmopolitan culture and global networking that is nonetheless locally rooted.⁸⁹ Thus, while the Spanish 15M movement was not a format “imported from the Arab Spring,” and Occupy Wall St. was not a replica of 15M, the movements felt like they were “interconnected and interdependent” parts of “the same global cycle” (Antentas 2015, 10). In highlighting the interconnections between movements as part of a “global cycle,” the commentators are, I will argue below, interested in a diagnosis of a broader global present where forms and practices of dissent are themselves undergoing transformations.

Yet, these claims are by no means unanimous or universal, as some commentators have argued that there have been far lower levels of solidarity between movements, and, further, that despite claims to rapid diffusion from place to place, the protests spread slowly, especially when compared to earlier global movements, like the 1990s anti- or alter-globalization mobilizations. The sociologist and activist Josep Maria Antentas argues that the *Indignados* and Occupy movements are “a new historical mutation of the internationalist perspective” in the context of economic crises (2015, 10), where internationalism is understood as a question of solidarity across borders (2). Antentas notes that, in contrast to the 1990s movements, the post-2011 protests were not part of “a transnational or global movement” but, as noted above, “a global wave of protest” (10). Thus, while there was mutual identification, as noted above, “specific international contacts and coalition-building strategies have been very weak” (11). The journalist and media scholar Paolo Gerbaudo similarly argues that while the 2011 wave of protests has

⁸⁹ Tarrow (2005), in a reading of anti-globalization movements, mobilizes the concept of “rooted cosmopolitans” in his description of the ways in which activists are rooted in particular national contexts but nonetheless a part of broader global trends and activities (qtd. in Antentas 2015, 6). Claims of interconnection are, again, an intensification of similar arguments made at the beginning of the 21st century, in interpretations of the 1990s and early 2000s anti-globalization movements. See, for instance, Donatella Della Porta and Sidney Tarrow (2005).

often been described as “a new global protest cycle,” the “[t]ransmission of protest frames and repertoires from one country and cultural region to another was quite slow and tortuous” (2013, 86). He contests arguments around the rapid spread of the 2011 protests, noting that, compared to “revolutionary years” like 1848, 1968 and 1989, the events of 2011 were transmitted rather slowly, and, in multiple ‘sub-waves’, from region to region (87). This claim is at odds with the claims of rapid diffusion due to digital communication technologies discussed elsewhere (Castells 2012; 2015; Tufekci 2017; Mason 2013a).

If there are clear detractors from the arguments about how digital networks are changing forms of protests, it must thus be asked what work these claims to the novelty of networked communications and interconnections are then doing? I highlight two underlying themes here. There is a need to consider the question of the cycle and the comparison. While commentators describe and diagnose the recent protests’ novelty as a way of assessing significance, they frequently compare the recent events to earlier protests. Are these events as important as the ones that took place in 1968? In 1848? In 1989? In 1999? Do they challenge power in the same way? Do they build solidarities in the same way? Comparison is, of course, a primary way in which change can be diagnosed, but, in this case, it is not precisely change, but rather a change that signals a particular *type of change* or a particular *form of novelty* that commentators diagnose. Thus, the diagnosis of a particular *type of change* or *form of novelty* here is a classification that seeks a novel political future by connecting it to forms of past dissent. Tufekci is, perhaps, aware of this move when she writes that, as both a scholar and participant-observer in Gezi Park, she has “a distinct sense of a cyclic process, of *déjà vu*, like living in a film I have already seen” (2017, xx). In this sense, then, there is also a

need to consider the *tone* in which the commentators describe the protests' novelty: there is an almost breathless excitement at the possibility of change, at the way that the protests have appeared and grown, and the global political future they manifest. Tufekci demonstrates this tone when she summarizes the arguments described in this section in her assessment of the Gezi protests:

A come-seemingly-from-nowhere protest of this scale was very novel for Turkey, which had no substantial previous political culture of large, leaderless movements. In Gezi, I was seeing the product of a global cultural convergence of protester aspirations and practices. If I squinted and ignored that the language was Turkish, I felt that it could have been almost any twenty-first-century protest square: organized through Twitter, filled with tear gas, leaderless, networked, euphoric, and fragile (2017, xv).

In noting the shared experiences of the protests she describes, Tufekci also notes the shared languages and approaches expressed by the movements around, for instance, participation and distrust of authority. The affordances of the digital networks through which these experiences were shared, she writes, signals that “[g]lobalization from below had arrived” (2017, xiv-xv). In this way, Tufekci calls back to both the euphoric, excited tone in which commentaries on the 1990s anti-globalization protests were written, and connects the diagnoses these commentaries made to contemporary events. Diagnostic commentaries on these earlier protests, from Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke’s *The Global Showdown* (2002) to Tom Mertes and Walden Bello’s *Movement of Movements* (2004) to Amory Starr’s *Naming the Enemy* (2000) (among many possible examples), took on the fast-paced, enthusiastic tone they diagnosed in the movements themselves. In both the comparisons to earlier movements and the excited tones of the contemporary commentaries themselves, it is the *claims to novelty that are familiar*. There is a familiarity in their ‘breathless excitement,’ in their proclamations that ‘everything is

changing' and 'everything is possible' in the space and time of the protest, in the global present.

In terms of novel political relations, commentators often framed 'everything is possible' as a celebration of either horizontalist consensus politics or a rejection of existing institutions in favour of a hegemonic class politics (Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013; Tejerina and Perugorria 2013; Castells 2012, 2015; Graeber 2011a; Mason 2013a; Dean 2012a, 2015; Zizek 2014, 2013, 2011). The sharing of space and time in protest camps enabled a politics of the encounter, which, in the case of members of Spain's 15M movement "allowed them to depart from '*old-time politics*' by temporarily experiencing (not just imagining) the utopia of '*doing real democracy now*', that is, engaging in '*common matters*' in an inclusive, horizontal, non-violent, and participatory fashion" (Tejerina and Perugorria 2013, 426). In *The Democracy Project*, David Graeber's contextual commentary and prescription of and for the emergence and consequences of the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States and prospects for American democracy emerging from Occupy, Graeber plays on a tension between articulating Occupy as a distinctly novel historical event, and as a continuity from past practices and approaches – be they the lessons of the broad-reaching protests of 1968, or the alternative globalization mobilizations of the 1990s. He writes that it is Occupy's rejection of traditional political orders and its focus on consensus politics within the camps "that called for the complete reinvention of American democracy" and spurred the growth of the movement across the United States and elsewhere (2011a). While the protesters' horizontalist practices were viewed as novel forms of politics and celebrated as such, some commentators also viewed them as an opportunity to bring together a coherent class politics – as a counterhegemonic possibility (Dean 2012a, 2012b; Zizek 2014, 2013). Yet,

this counter-posing of alternative possible political relations as the claimed novelty of the 2009-2013 protests has a familiar ring – that between the alternatives posed by anarchist or autonomist thinkers and Marxist-oriented thinkers, an opposition that has been present in discussions of the alternatives posed by practices of dissent at least since Karl Marx's rejection of the ideas of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (2008 [1847]). This re-appearance and significance of this problematic in the commentaries is discussed in depth in Chapter 6.

The final significant claim to novelty articulated in many of the commentaries on the 2009-2013 protests is that of the emergence of novel forms of subjectivity. I will not dwell on these, as this is the subject of Chapter 5, but it is worth noting their framing specifically as novel here. Claims to novel subjectivities are described in terms of either a new form of collective subject or a networked individual subject (Castells 2012; Graeber 2011a; Dean 2012a, 2012b; Mason 2011a; Krastev 2014; Zevnik 2014). Questions of pluralization precede and are extended through the commentaries on the 2009-2013 protests and concern the pluralization of the modern figure of the autonomous *individual* subject: so there is the question of the multitude, questions of the people, the crowd, and the common as ways in which plural subjectivities emerge through practices of protestors, as temporary forms of a pluralized subjectivity always in the process of becoming.⁹⁰ By contrast, for Krastev, it is the relation between collective and individual that is significant here, as it appears to be for Castells and Mason as well. Here, it is *through* the communal that individual subjectivities are transformed and reasserted, rather than a question of an explicitly plural subjectivity. The novel politics and subjective transformations celebrated in the commentaries are not only thought through an emotional movement associated with dissent but also through the theorization of a

⁹⁰ For earlier theorizations in this vein, see, for example Hardt and Negri 2005 and Virno 2004.

shift in public consciousness, a kind of awareness raising that shifts perceptions and thus reorients ways of being. Yet, as I will discuss in the next chapter, raising consciousness through explanation of the event proves inadequate if one does not delve into the epistemological frameworks through which these claims are made. Finally, it is worth noting that claims of novel subjectivities tend to be directed towards Enlightenment forms of emancipation. This is often an explicit aim, as is the case for Castells, who sees in the protests the possibility of the realization of Enlightenment ideals (2012, 246). As Inanna Hamati-Ataya has explained, however, the possibility of reconciling new forms of subjectivity and possibilities of emancipation is a fraught project, because it is through the desire for emancipation that we are constituted as modern, Enlightenment subjects.

Exemplarities and repetitions

The commentaries explain protests through reference to a broad *ethos*, framed in the form of diagnoses that articulate a range of limited alternatives that draw on Marxist-inspired hopes, themes of autonomy, and Enlightenment ideals. In this section, I discuss how these orientations are reflected in the work of three thinkers in particular: Slavoj Zizek, Manuel Castells and David Graeber. Each of these three commentators proceeds through a particular mode and orientation of explanation, which is both informed by a commitment to a particular approach and serves as a prerequisite for the postulation for future alternatives. Further, each of the forms of explanation, perhaps obviously, betray the ideological commitments and attendant aims of such commitments vis-a-vis the protests – Zizek’s Leninism, Castells’ Enlightenment-inspired, ‘networked’ liberalism, Graeber’s small-a anarchist and autonomist approaches.

Diagnoses of a novel spatiotemporal present or contemporaneity are themselves nothing new, and especially so vis-a-vis considerations of the significance of social

movements and protests. They are very much a marker of modern practices of critique. In his 1988 commentary on what he calls “critical social movements,” *One World, Many Worlds*, Walker identifies a similar set of concerns to both those articulated thinking through a novel form of social transformation – a novel global *ethos* – and the more recent commentaries on protests I discuss. The text, a report on the 1985/6 discussions of the Committee for a Just World Peace, carried on over five continents, begins from a contextualization and juxtaposition between “global structural transformations” and “critical social movements.” Walker notes that a significant challenge is the drive to explain the novelty of both critical social movements and global structural transformations using inadequate concepts and categories, as “the conventional categories seem out of joint with the times” (1988, 7). As mentioned above, the 1990s social movements and commentaries around them have been understood as foregrounding the more recent emergence and intensification of protests around the globe. Many of these movements have been celebrated for the novel interconnections between diverse groups of people in a wide range of geographical locations that they have cultivated, and the innovative direct action tactics they have developed.⁹¹ Yet, Walker’s comments on and diagnoses of, movements and *ethos*, 25 years on, remain prescient:

there is an emerging sense on the part of both the participants in these movements and a wide range of academic analysts that something new is going on...Such movements have a sense of vibrancy and a willingness to articulate alternative ways of knowing and acting that put the claim to politics as usual into serious question. They arise, as always, under conditions of social distress. They respond to a future that is seen as threatening. But their response does not easily conform to the conventional accounts of what political practice involves (1988, 30).

⁹¹ See, for example, Mertes and Bello, eds. 2004.

This is especially the case as the “critical social movements” Walker and his colleagues investigate, dated back at least 25 years from 1988. These concerns about the perpetual diagnosis of novelty in social movements or protests, then, and the problem of articulation, are at least half a century old. In this sense, the contemporary commentaries proceed through forms of explanation that betray a tension between attempts to diagnose a novelty in contemporary protest events and explain the events through well worn accounts of what such a novelty might be – a kind of perpetuity of the novel.

That is to say that the political potential of (potentially) novel politics is too often resolved into desires and hopes linked to long cultivated ideological commitments and habits of thought. For Castells, the protests are largely about a revitalization of the liberal democratic process. He concludes that:

at the end of the day, the dreams of social change will have to be watered down, and channeled through the political institutions, either by reform or revolution... The most positive influence of the movement on politics may happen indirectly through the assumption by some political parties or leaders of some of the themes and demands of the movement, particularly when they reach popularity among large sectors of citizens (2012, 236).

In this sense, Castells’ argument seems to be that there is an exciting openness and fluidity in the emergence of contemporary protests that, perhaps, signals the possibility of social transformation, which is linked to a revitalization of existing institutions.

By contrast, for Zizek, contemporary movements can be nothing other than revolutionary, in Marx’s sense, where “in a revolutionary period, it becomes clear that nothing will improve without radical global change” (2013). Both a future programme of action and the ontological basis for political life are described by what he calls “the Idea of Communism,” which is the basis through which the articulation of protests can be understood and what animates their future. This involves both a universalization of a people, and a programme. This is distinctly not the same, however, as leftist liberal

democratic aspirations or the radical egalitarian processes of autonomist anarchists – the process of social transformation, “after the initial unity of the people falls apart,” requires the elaboration of a new set of concepts, which is to be constructed through adherence to a kind of Leninist-Weberian-Lacanian “New Master.” Yet, while an existing order may not be a communist order, it is perhaps difficult to argue that an “Idea of Communism” is not itself integral to the existing order. As I will argue in Chapter Five, leftist and communist approaches have long served as standardized alternatives to the modern liberal status quo.

For Graeber, various forms of collective action and engagement suggest that in many ways, contemporary societies are already attuned to communist practices – we act like communists with those we love and trust, but also in public situations where assisting others is necessary and in work contexts (2011a). While Graeber identifies a much broader conception of communism than Zizek, this is linked to what he calls his “small a anarchist” commitments. In this sense, while he too is interested in imagining a novel politics emerging from contemporary practices of dissent, his commitment to particular sets of direct democratic processes is itself a kind of anti-institutional programmatic.⁹²

These kinds of explanations, despite considerable hesitation on the part of commentators about forms of classification, seek understanding through familiar categories of explanation. For Zizek, there is a simple, general description of the protests – “what the protestors actually stood for: universal social and political emancipation” (2014, 98) – from which he can then expand his analysis into a discussion of “the structural impossibility of finding a global political order that corresponds to the global

⁹² I recognize that this section, in outlining the forms of analysis, is a rehearsing and repeating of these forms. In part, this is intentional, for the pragmatic purpose of outlining the formulations of the categories. In effect, of course, this section (indeed, the chapter/dissertation itself) reproduces the practices of classification I identify here as problematic.

capitalist economy” (2014, 160). This incompatibility opens him up to theorizing about the future through his particular and peculiar formulation of “the Idea of Communism” (2014, 104), which takes the protests as a starting point for thinking, but quickly leaves them behind as largely indicative of “imaginary illusions” that will inevitably fall apart, requiring a vanguardist organization to guide the post-capitalist transformation of society.

Castells is more tentative. He begins *Networks of Outrage and Hope* with a kind of uncertainty, excited by the phenomena taking place, but also interested in contributing in ways otherwise and in addition to what he calls his “often confused activism” (xii). His aim, then, is to make a strategic intervention “with the hope of identifying the new paths of social change in our time, and … stimulat[ing] a debate on the practical (and ultimately political) implications of these hypotheses” (4). He writes that, in this initial commentary on the protests, he will “not code the observation of these movements in abstract terms to fit into the conceptual approach presented here. Rather, my theory will be embedded in a selective observation of the movements, to bring together at the end of my intellectual journey the most salient findings of this study in an analytical framework” (2012, 17-18). Yet, the text proceeds through the elaboration of such an analytical network through the cases of protests in Tunisia and Iceland, and devoting the rest of the book to testing this model.

Graeber’s interest in thinking about Occupy Wall Street as an exemplary event is to consider Occupy as, at least in part, a site of emergence of new concepts and the revitalization of old concepts, particularly a rethinking of understandings of both politics and democracy, as a means of “laying the groundwork for a genuinely democratic culture” (2011a). He writes in an earlier essay that his intent is to “try to rethink terms like realism, imagination, alienation, bureaucracy, revolution itself” and why these terms

“which for most of us seem rather to evoke long-since forgotten debates of the 1960s, still resonate” in activist circles (4), as a means of attempting to “begin to create something new.” The concept of *democracy* is central as a concept to be reimagined for Graeber. There is, he argues, a set of power relations in play in staking a claim to what *democracy* is and what its history is. Graeber is interested in challenging such histories, identifying the concept of democracy with consensus-based, direct democracy in the Greek tradition. Graeber’s conception of democracy is thus one of “collective deliberation on the principle of full and equal participation,” rather than electoral representation. This form of democracy, he argues, is today largely pursued by anarchists, who for the most part reject existing structures in favour of the creation of new communities rather than confrontation with the powers of the day (through the pursuit of autonomy rather than insurrection). This question of autonomy, as derived from the novelty claimed in the protests, is itself representative of the major historical alternative to Marxism or communism claimed in protest movements.

Forms of novelty and the question of the present

The thrust of the argument introduced in the first part of this chapter is that prominent commentaries on protest, in explaining the potential novelty of recent protest events, tend to reproduce a set of timeworn formulations of what protests and their futures might be. Despite an excitement about the possible emergence of novel forms of politics through protest, the commentaries appear to struggle with a tension between an excitement of claims to novelty – a possible future emerging from a novel present – and a desire for understanding which is coupled with a recourse to knowable categories through which to understand practices of dissent. In this section, I explore the relation between

understandings of possible knowledge and practices of classification, in relation to the modern obsession with questioning the present and the novel.

The question of the diagnosis of the present – the novelty and distinctiveness of the present – first appears with Kant’s “What is Enlightenment?” (1784), but a related version (“What to do with the will for revolution?”) can be found also in his reflection on the question of revolution, after the revolution in France, in “On the Conflict of the Faculties” (1798). As Foucault puts it, the question Kant is most interested in here is the question of the specificity of the present: “What difference does today introduce with respect to yesterday?” (2007, 105); “What is happening *right now*?... and what is this *right now* we all are in which defines the moment at which I am writing?” (2007, 84). These are the questions of and for the critical attitude of the Enlightenment: the question of knowledge – “the conditions under which true knowledge is possible” – and the question of the present – “What is an actuality? What is the present field of possible experiences?” (2007, 100). This critical attitude, the repetition of questions of possible knowledges in a distinct and novel present which we have inherited, valorized, cultivated, and, in many ways, made dogmatic, involves a reflexive double move of representation. The question is not only, then, “What is my actuality?” but also “what am I doing when I speak about this actuality?” (2007, 87). For Foucault, this is a key aspect of the examination of modernity, and can be linked to considerations of commentary as discursive practice – the movement between describing and creating, and perhaps a way of thinking of the conjunction of protests and commentaries on them vis-à-vis tensions between possible ways of knowing and diagnosing novelty in the present. That is to say, questions of understanding the present – and understanding change in the present – are bound up with questions of knowledge.

These archetypical questions of Enlightenment appear again and again in the commentaries on protests, as commentators attempt to articulate understandings of a novel spatiotemporal present. In his widely disseminated speech at the Occupy Wall Street camp in New York,⁹³ Zizek asks “What do we perceive today as possible?” arguing that part of the question of the novelty of the protests is that “we lack the language to articulate our unfreedom.” In a commentary on the 2013 protests in Turkey and Brazil (some of the largest protests any of those countries had seen in decades), Zizek writes that, today, we have to adjudicate a difference between a revolutionary and reformist period, asking “Where do we stand today with respect to this difference? Are the problems and protests of the last few years signs of an approaching global crisis, or are they just minor obstacles that can be dealt with by means of local interventions?” (Zizek 2013). The title of Graeber’s 2007 essay on revolution is similarly framed in a Kantian manner – “Revolution in Reverse, or on the conflict between political ontologies of violence and political ontologies of the imagination” – evoking the “Conflict of the faculties” in both title and orientation.

The question of the present is *both* the modern question and the question that makes the presumed stabilities of modernity wobble. It is this questioning of the present that produces novelty and, importantly, the desire for novelty, as a modern category, and indeed a modern category of knowledge. Foucault writes that the Enlightenment “is a period which set out to formulate its own motto, its own precept, and which spells out what is to be done both in relation to its present and to the forms of knowledge, ignorance, and illusion in which it is capable of recognizing its historical situation” (2007, 88). Enlightenment is also the first time that *names itself*. From here on in, periods

⁹³ A transcript is available on the web at <http://www.imposemagazine.com/bytes/slavoj-zizek-at-occupy-wall-street-transcript>.

of time, and movements in thought and action are constantly named. This is clear from the protests, named with conventional monikers and also sometimes as ‘hashtag revolutions’: “#danswithme” in Bulgaria, “the Arab Spring,” “Occupy Wall St.”/ “#OWS” and so on. At the same time, it is the reflexive questioning of modernity that always precludes the sought for certainties of classification, of deciding and explaining just what kind of event is at hand, what its effects and consequences are to be, and, for many commentators, *should be*. In the Enlightenment, “one sees philosophy problematize its own discursive actuality: an actuality that it questions as an event, as an event whose meaning, value, and philosophical singularity it has to express and in which it has to find both its own reason for being and the foundation for what it says” (Foucault 2007, 85). It is in this way that the particular temporality associated with modernity is an effect of classification.⁹⁴ The questioning and defining of the present produces a particular kind of modern historical temporality that projects a future. It is also in this way that modernity reproduces the same sets of questions through the same practices of questioning as the mode of representation of modernity. For Castells, the protests are indeed a continuation of the Enlightenment project, a kind of re-statement and resetting of the ideals and aims of the Enlightenment, in view of a novel present, a present of new beginnings which can be understood and represented, at least provisionally, through a set of questions and classificatory responses. He writes that:

These networked social movements are new forms of democratic movements...They acknowledge the principles that ushered in the freedom revolutions of the Enlightenment, while pinpointing the continuous betrayal of these principles, starting with the original denial of full citizenship to women, minorities and colonized people... They assert their right to start all over again. To begin the beginning, after reaching the threshold of self-destruction by our current institutions (2012, 246).

⁹⁴ I owe thanks to Rob Walker for this formulation.

In this way, Castells exemplifies articulations of modernity as a specific kind of temporal awareness associated with diagnoses of discontinuities in time, with “a break with tradition, a feeling of novelty, of vertigo in the face of the passing moment... [where] [m]odernity is not a phenomenon of sensitivity to the fleeting present; it is the will to ‘heroize’ the present” (Foucault 2007, 106). This is, perhaps, the question of the proclamations of a novel present and its classifications in the commentaries. The questions of the commentaries are thus not only around excitement about a *novelty* of a present, but also an aspiration, a hope, a “heroization” of the present as a break, a possibility.

In a Kantian refrain, Zizek ends *Trouble in Paradise* by asking “[s]o where do we stand today?” suggesting that “[m]aybe, we don’t even stand but just lean forward in a very specific way” (2014, 213). Zizek’s conclusion, while claiming that he cannot reconcile his text through singular underlying ideas like “Negri’s ‘multitude’ or Piketty’s ‘soak the rich,’” he “nonetheless hopes that the creative reader will discern beneath the multiple topics the Communist horizon. Communism today is not the name of a solution, but the name of a *problem*, the problema of *commons* in all its dimensions... commons as the universal space of humanity from which no one should be excluded” (214). So for Zizek, then, there is a global present which is simultaneously novel and cyclical, contingent and teleological, politically open and yet with a clear political strategy in place. This approach, it is my sense, rushes to both diagnose and explain and to move or “lean” somewhere “forward.” While Zizek begins, and quickly moves forward from, the suggestion that contemporary protest movements are indicative of a novelty in both a present time and a present perception of change and changing temporalities, he proceeds with little reflection on the simultaneous radical significance of proclaiming a novel

global present as such and the significance of such proclamations for the maintenance of a particular kind of modern history and politics of limits.

How can we think, then, the categories through which the linking of protests into a single spatiotemporal present works? As twentieth century critical philosophy has made the instabilities of modern knowledge apparent,⁹⁵ it has been clear for some time that we no longer have “an over-arching or ‘intrinsic narrative’ in Western philosophy into which to insert in advance such critical questions or the critical attitudes they suppose” (Rajchman 2007, 21). There is, rather, Rajchman writes, “only a series of different ‘todays’, superimposed on one another in the entangled history of philosophies, in which, in given conditions, new questions arise, or older ones are re-cast, to displace and start up the problems of philosophy from a new angle or in relation to a new lumière” (21). As Walker puts it, “periods of rapid change always induce apprehension. And apprehension not only encourages attempts to maintain order, permanence and privilege amid impending chaos, but also to capture the rush of events within familiar categories” (1988, 22). This is the case, I argue, even among those sympathetic to the possibilities of practices of dissent, as the above discussions of the aporetic tensions in the commentaries should demonstrate.

My preliminary proposition is that the present is a borderland, where we are both deeply aware of change, and yet struggle to articulate (and not only *articulate* but also *conceptualize*) through new concepts the quality of the changes that are in process and to come. This is, I suggest, because our understanding of both what constitutes change and what constitutes a concept is changing. Thus, again following Walker’s twenty-year old exhortation, if we wish to take seriously understandings of a global spatiotemporality of

⁹⁵ For three quite different takes, see Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, Foucault 1970 and Spivak 1999.

protests as spaces where both conceptions of modern politics and subjectivities are being reworked, “then it is precisely the categories through which we have been seduced into thinking about what social movements [and practices of dissent more generally] must be (even if it is clear that we do not know what they are) that must be put into question” (Walker 1994, 699). From here, then, I move to a few reflections on the possibilities and limits of thinking about a global present, with emphasis on a twenty-five year old essay (and, yet, still prescient in view of the 250 year old problem that turns out to be at stake in this *now*) from Ashis Nandy, on the limits of the categories of Enlightenment for thinking a global or a world at all.

In working through what he calls contemporary theories and languages of “liberation” functioning in the parts of the world outside the West, Nandy points out that such theories and languages, in order to be intelligible, “audible,” or taken seriously at all, have to be framed through particular categories and kinds of speaking (1989, 267), where “dissent to qualify as dissent must be fully translatable into the idiom of modernity” (271). The dominant languages of liberation are internal to questions of modernity.⁹⁶ They are the critical attitudes and questions of Enlightenment which, in seeking the limits of modernity, often serve to reproduce them, with their attendant “touch[es] of manageability or untameability” emerging from the romantic traditions of 19th century Europe (Nandy 1989, 271). The problem of dissent, formulated in this way, is itself a kind of critique built into the structures of modern knowledge, “a prototypical

⁹⁶ In the Indian context, at the time of Nandy’s writing, many of these languages of liberation drew their inspirations from Marx and Marxian analyses, and, in doing so, valorized Marxian conceptions of cultural progress, cultivating a kind of “internalized Europe.” In this way, Marx “was turned into a symbol of transcending that part of one’s own cultural self that had become associated with humiliation, victimization and self-contempt... Marx suggested that another internalized Europe, brought about by colonial conquest, would supply the principles and frames of dissent to help contain or counter the depredations of imperial Europe. The only concession that second Europe demanded in return was that all other forms of resistance, rooted in the world view of the violated, be jettisoned as ineffective, effeminate, superstitious and romantic” (2003, 204-5). See, especially Nandy 2003 and Nandy 2004.

pathology of the Enlightenment vision of the human future, a vision which sees itself as the last word in human self-realization" (1989, 269). This is the question of the way commentaries of the present as novel, and of novel forms of dissent, are indicative of and reproduce Enlightenment and modern understandings. Nandy is careful to note that his interest isn't in trying to take on or translate or work with given modern categories – perhaps his sense is something like Dipesh Chakrabarty's "inadequate" but "indispensable" diagnosis for the questions of history (2008). Resistance and dissent, especially in those parts of the world outside the West, Nandy stresses, is also resistance to modernity and resistance to concepts (1987, 117).

To attempt to consider questions of a global or a world, through projects of dissent, then, must to some extent be to begin to divorce such projects of dissent from Enlightenment assumptions of what a global or world might mean. This, as I have argued, must involve both an awareness and a challenging of the epistemological assumptions upon which our conceptions of what forms and aspirations of dissent might be. As Walker notes in his own commentary on the possibilities and limits of (then) contemporary critical social movements,

[i]f we recognize the frailty of those conceptions of knowledge, normative aspirations, methods of analysis, and so on, that have arisen both out of the culture of modernity and out of other cultural traditions, then thinking about the future requires considerable exploration of new ways of knowing the world... [this] is a recognition that our understanding of what constitutes knowledge is always changing and is changing under social conditions (1988, 74).

This recognition always comes paired, however, with the recognition of the repetition of the same, the limits through which our modes of knowing through classifying produce the worlds we believe we live in and their possibilities.

It is in this sense that I think about the 2009-2013 protests: they have been sites where significant commentaries have been made on the diagnosis of a novel global

present; sites where novel politics and novel political subjectivities may be emerging; yet, both this question of novelty and the modern desire for novelty function to replicate the aporetic political conditions through which, perhaps, the protests emerged.

Conclusion

Why is this problem of the *language* of novelty, the *classification* – the novelty of dissent, the novelty of a spatiotemporal present – politically significant? At the very least, the political significance of the reproduction of the same, in the guise of the novel and perhaps emancipatory, is apparent, and longstanding. My aim here, in drawing attention to the links between attempts at explaining the novelty as the significance of recent protests and longstanding practices of classification associated with the legacies of Enlightenment hopes and ideals, has been to, in an initial pass, draw attention to this reproduction and to trouble its consequences. This form of reproduction is, I argue, in echoing Foucault's conclusion in *The Order of Things*, the mode of representation of modernity, where the form of novelty is represented through the questions of Enlightenment modernity. Yet, at the same time, this form is aporetic in the reflexivity of its questioning and positioning. The commentators are aware of the limitations of their forms of explanation, yet cannot but reproduce them *as novel*. What is being gestured at but never arrived at is novelty in a new form. The problem, it appears, is the escape from novelty in its old (modern) form. At the very least, we have to consider why 25-year-old reflections on the status of practices of dissent (Nandy, Walker) read as contemporary in relation to protest events of the last five years. As I have argued, part of the problem lies in the forms of interpretation through which we seek to think about possibilities of dissent in modernity.

Chapter 4: Classifying dissenters: Forms and limits of subjectivities in contemporary protests

‘What is man?’ asked Kant. Nothing, says Foucault. ‘For what then may we hope?’ asked Kant. Does Foucault give the same nothing in reply?... To think so is to misunderstand Foucault’s hypothetical reply to the question about Man. Foucault said that the concept Man is a fraud, not that you and I are nothing. Likewise the concept Hope is all wrong. The hopes attributed to Marx or Rousseau are perhaps part of that very concept Man, and they are a sorry basis for optimism. Optimism, pessimism, nihilism, and the like are all concepts that make sense only within the idea of a transcendental or enduring subject... If we are not satisfied, it should not be because he is pessimistic. It is because he has given no surrogate for whatever it is that springs eternal in the human breast – Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology*, 2002, 86

And should we not also recognize that the search for emancipation is no less grounded in the modern... episteme than is the search for truth? Can there be any emancipation other than that of the Subject? Have we ever really extracted the problematic of emancipation from the Western paradigm of humanism? – Inanna Hamati-Ataya, “Worlding beyond the Self?”, 2013, 37

Introduction

Writing of the Spanish *Indignadas* movement in his 2012 *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, the sociologist Manuel Castells explains that it is “a movement of multiple, rich discourses. Imaginative slogans, punchy terms, meaningful words and poetic expressions constituted a language ecosystem expressive of new subjectivities” (125). Castells’ analysis is exemplary of many commentaries on the 2009-2013 wave of protests around the globe, combining a narrative around novel languages and methods with the emergence of new ways of being, and being together – new subjectivities. Many public engagements with these protests – from journalists, academics, activists, and so on – articulate the possibility of an emerging politics that is inextricably tied to questions around modes of subjectivity and modes of action. It is this relationship between novel politics and novel subjectivities in protest or dissent that this chapter will examine.

Of the proliferation of sympathetic literature on the protests, there has been persistent emphasis on extending the foci of earlier movements, practices, and commentaries to thinking about the ways in which practices of dissent through public

protest engender the emergence of new forms of thinking and acting politically, as discussed in the previous chapter. While the anarchist inflections of the 1990s movements responding to neoliberal globalization emphasized consensus, coalition and prefigurative politics, subsequent articulations of a politics of dissent have emphasized subjective shifts more explicitly.⁹⁷ These shifts often involve pluralizations of the modern figure of the autonomous *individual* subject: so there is the question of the multitude, questions of the people, the crowd, and the common as ways in which plural subjectivities emerge through practices of protestors, as temporary forms of a pluralized subjectivity always in the process of becoming.⁹⁸

These thinkers emphasize the specific spatiotemporalities through which subjectivities are formed. Occupations of public spaces and the building of networked communities and solidarities through means of communication enable both novel understandings of the spaces and times where these movements are taking place and the emergence of new subjectivities through them. Underlying these spatiotemporal orientations is a persistent emotional narrative through which the protests inculcate the appearance of new subjectivities. All of these conditions, commentators conclude, enable broad shifts in public consciousness – not only the perceptions of those participating in the protests, but also, as Kant writes in his reflections on the French Revolution, those observing the events, and those commenting (qtd. in Foucault 2007, 91).

As discussed in the last chapter, our desires for novelty themselves take a specifically modern form where a persistent desire for the new is associated with self-understanding.⁹⁹ An analogous desire can be located in the question posed by a Berlin

⁹⁷ See, for example, Mertes and Bello 2004.

⁹⁸ See, for example, Hardt and Negri 2005, Virno 2004, addressed in more detail below.

⁹⁹ There is a formal tension here that is perhaps part of the point – I am reproducing the modern necessities and limits that I am saying much of the commentaries themselves overlook.

newspaper in 1784 – *Was ist Aufklärung?* – which elicited Immanuel Kant’s popular elucidation of the autonomous modern subject. Michel Foucault argues that this was a question of assessing the present, where “The Prussian newspaper was basically asking: ‘What just happened to us? What is this event that is nothing other than what we have just said, thought and done – nothing other than ourselves, nothing other than this something that we were and that we still are” (2007, 121). Taken this way, this question overlaps with those asked by the commentaries I work with here. The commentaries’ attempts to make sense of who we are, and how we know what is going on in our present, become necessary political questions to ask when thinking about the massive protest events of 2009-2013.

In doing this, I address a specific intersection around questions of *epistemology*, *politics*, and *subjectivity* to ask, “what to make of claims that the recent persistence of mass protests around the globe is indicative of shifting articulations of political subjectivity?” How do we *understand* dissent and its effects? How, as Michel Foucault asks in “What is Enlightenment?”, “are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge?” (2007, 117). This is where I think it’s helpful to review Foucault’s work on both the questions of the Enlightenment – questions of novelty, subjectivity, and limits – and his early archaeological writings on the conditions of the figure of Man as both subject and object of modern knowledge. What I’m most interested in is the way Foucault points to the aporia of our desires to achieve the Kantian Enlightenment ideals that form the basis of modern subjectivity while at the same time recognizing that the modern subject, or ‘Man’ has died, a tension Foucault identified first in his reading of Kant’s anthropology. Tracing this set of concerns, it is my sense, reveals not only the link between novelty and subjectivity in the anxiety around dissent but also the question of

freedom underlying this anxiety: the question of whether our concepts of freedom and emancipation are constitutively linked to a particular kind of political subject (as the epigraph to this essay suggests).

Before I begin the substantive argument, two provisos are in order. First, given that my focus here is on the question of subjectivity and dissent, it may seem peculiar to focus on Foucault's archaeological texts. Yet, as Béatrice Han has noted, "[i]n one of his last texts, Foucault defined his philosophical enterprise as an 'analysis of the conditions in which certain relations between subject and object are formed or modified, insofar as they are constitutive of a possible knowledge.'" This is the question of the historical *a priori*, which Han suggests Foucault reaffirms as crucial to his project (Han 2005, 176). Further, Han notes that, for Foucault, "an entity or an epistemological domain can only appear as an object to be known if it is discovered through a specific positioning of the subject of knowledge" (177). This question of what is knowable at any given moment thus becomes not exactly a question of agential action, but rather a question of the subject's positioning. Thus, the intersections of a relationship between a knowing subject, a knowable event, and an epistemological frame become apparent.

I undertake a reading of the position of the modern subject as a formal epistemological-political principle that is informed by Foucault's archaeological approach. As discussed in Chapter 1, Foucault describes this as an investigation of a "middle region" "between the already 'encoded' eye and reflexive knowledge" (2002, xxii). This middle region is where order itself is ordered, through culturally and historically specific ordering categories and practices that are both the progenitors of contemporary understandings of classification and completely foreign to them. Further, it is through this foreignness that thinking through the middle region reveals, that it is

possible to glimpse the limits of our forms of knowledge, and, perhaps, the historicity and delimitation of our political aspirations. An archaeology, then, is concerned not only with the tracing of specific ideas from their contemporary iterations to their historical mutations, but also in the question of what Foucault calls “systems of simultaneity,” the multiple and identical underlying orders that are the conditions of possibility for the emergence of empirical and conceptual knowledges in any given period. These underlying orders are what Foucault calls “epistemological fields” (xxiv).

In making this motivation explicit, I hope to distinguish my own approach from that dismissed by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, who take archaeology as something that “unearths the models of the past,” and favour a genealogy “in which the subject creates new institutional and social models based on its own productive capacities” (2005, 309). Thus, they evince a hope for a new ontology oriented around:

launching a new investigation in order to formulate a new science of society and politics... it is a matter of calling on ourselves to grasp the present biopolitical needs and imagine the possible conditions of a new life, immersing ourselves in the movements of history and the anthropological transformations of subjectivity. A new science of the production of wealth and political constitution aimed at global democracy can emerge only from this new ontology (312).

Yet, as I hope this chapter will demonstrate, such an emphasis on novelty and subjective transformation runs the risk of forgetting the epistemological limits through which it is constituted and, hence, subsumed within them. Here, rather than a question of unearthing, my interest in the archaeologies is in their emphasis on what conceptualizations, given the ethos of a particular episteme, are thinkable, and significantly, *in what form*. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, our present condition – where we are both deeply aware of change, but struggle to articulate new concepts – is because our understanding of both what constitutes change and what constitutes a concept is changing. Thus, Hardt

and Negri's aim to "invent new models and methods... [where] [a] new science of global democracy would not simply restore our political vocabulary from the corruptions it has suffered; it would also have to transform all the primary political concepts" (309) proves much more challenging when thought archaeologically. To this end, Inanna Hamati-Ataya argues that we should "wonder to what extent they share its cognitive myopia, and whether a *discourse-level critique* is a critique at all" (2013, 31). To think about the contemporary position of the modern political subject requires analysis at the level of *form*. Yet, Hamati-Ataya suggests, we often treat problems at the level of form at the level of substance, through which the figure of the subject – "from the Subject, underneath, to the Subject, above all" – is multiplied and reified (37). When the movements in the street conclude, to what extent can we say that the posited shift in public consciousness, or more specifically, the emergence and pluralization of subjectivities, is mutually exclusive of a continuation of business as usual, 'the usual order of things'? As I hope the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, the usual order, or more specifically, the understanding of political subjectivity emerging from European Enlightenment, can accommodate such shifts and pluralizations. The principle or *form* of subjectivity remains while subjectivities proliferate (Walker 2016, 25).

Long(er)standing claims to novel subjectivities

As noted in the previous chapter, it is also important to discuss some of these protests' background orientations. To do this, I turn first to David Graeber's 2002 essay, "The New Anarchists," originally published in *The New Left Review* and subsequently collected in the edited collection *Movement of movements: Is another world really possible* (Mertes, ed. 2004). *Movement of Movements* is an exemplar of the connectivities imagined in the late 1990s against war, corporatism in the guise of globalization and so

on, emerging through communist, anarchist and socialist traditions, but, also, imbued with the sensitization of the identity politics of the 1990s and (perhaps) somewhat more geographically wide-reaching than the recent events that are the focus of this dissertation. As an anthropologist and an active participant in many of the mass protest events of the late 1990s, Graeber seeks to set out what specifically is ‘new’ about anti-globalization movements (like the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle, Quebec City, Genoa and so on), specifically against criticisms about a lack of coherent ideology, purpose, or collectivity in the aims of those involved. What is going on, Graeber suggests, is a ‘new’ anarchism, based on practices developed largely outside the West (he cites Gandhi’s nonviolence and the Zapatistas), and working through prefigurative and (self)transformative actions and approaches. In this sense, the new anarchism has a significant subjective component, where those participating in the movement(s) are changed by their experiences in it. Graeber writes that “[i]t’s one thing to say, ‘Another world is possible’. It’s another to experience it, however momentarily” (72).

The “new anarchism” Graeber diagnoses is, on the whole, global and against neoliberalism, oriented as a kind of global citizenship, enabled through free movement of peoples and access to technology.¹⁰⁰ On an operational scale, it is non-violent, often using absurdist tactics, “a ‘new language’ of civil disobedience” (66). For instance, Graeber emphasizes the novelty of protest signs and chants which both diagnose the absurdity of the global situation, and bring protestors together as in on the joke – “‘The pizza united can never be defeated’, ‘Hey ho, hey ho – ha ha, hee hee!’, as well as meta-chants like

¹⁰⁰ As discussed below and in the next chapter, the questions of technology and the ‘networked’ protest are further emphasized in the 2009-2013 protests. See, for instance, Castells 2012, Mason 2013a, Gerbaudo 2013, Tufekci 2017.

‘Call! Response! Call! Response!’” (2002, 67).¹⁰¹ Graeber thus argues that the movement is, on the one hand, about a reinvention of democracy, through new tactics and approaches and, on the other hand, about the transformation of subjectivity, the changing identities of those participating.

It is in part on this basis that Graeber is deeply critical of sympathetic commentators on social movements who he suggests do not know what is going on, and, furthermore, are basically liberals “interested in expanding individual freedoms and pursuing social justice, but not in ways that would seriously challenge the existence of reigning institutions like capital or state” (2002, 61). Commentators are not radicals when they do not recognize that what’s going on is a (new) anarchist “movement of movements.” Graeber is particularly critical of intellectuals and theorists who have built careers on advocating for the creation of particular kinds of ideological movements who do not support the emergence of the anti-globalization movements and often do not understand the movements as significant (2002, 61). Nearly two decades years later, this argument seems to continue to hold, as commentators’ enthusiasm for diagnosing the novelty of the present, as the last chapter has discussed, and its subjective transformations sounds familiar. Indeed, Graeber’s own narration of the OWS events in New York, in *The Democracy Project*, is one such familiar node.

Against (and often in *arguing against*) this background, significant theoretical discussions emerge around the modes of subjective transformation that the 1990s antiglobalization movements engender: questions around the pluralization of subjectivity through concepts of the “multitude,” the “common,” the “people” – articulations of a collective subject – which become significant to more recent discussions of protest and

¹⁰¹ We will see these again in more recent movements like, for example, Occupy Wall Street’s infamous “Everything is fucked up and bullshit” sign.

dissent.¹⁰² Hardt and Negri's conception of the multitude involves both an unworking (or reworking) of political subjectivity as understood through the figure of the modern rational subject and, as Nicolas Tampio puts it, "a political subjectivity generating, and generated by, our time" (2005, no page).¹⁰³ In this dual function, the multitude becomes a form for both novel politics and novel subjectivities.

As the follow-up to their massively popular articulation of (post)modern imperialism in *Empire*, *Multitude* seeks to develop the political subject of empire, the multitude, as the combined individual subjects who have the capacity to both sustain and resist Empire. This understanding of multitude as political subject comes in part through their readings of the globalization protests described above – in Seattle 1999, Genoa 2001, and also through the creation and success of the 2001 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. Hardt and Negri identify in the alternative globalization movement a dialogical and polyphonic organization, where there is common transformation through a common narration. Multiple distinct voices come together to create a common set of aims in response to a common story. Thus, they celebrate “[t]he multitude in movement... [as] a

¹⁰² It is also important to note the significance of the New Social Movements (NSM) literatures, associated with Alain Touraine and Antonio Melucci in North American contexts, at this time. Challenging the dominance of resource mobilization theories as a mode of analysis of social movements, the NSM movements focus significantly on identity, and the self-awareness of the significance of identity. New social movements theories seek to respond to the failure of Marxist and resource mobilization theory-inspired approaches to describe emerging forms of social movements – like women's movements, LGBT movements and broad-based environmental movements. This problem, arguably translatable to a contemporary context, is described by Touraine as “the new movements either fall[ing] back on past experience, sentiments, or else becom[ing] paralyzed by the political or ideological categories of the workers' movement which they continue to make use of although it no longer conforms to what they practice” (1981, 13). Similarly, Melucci emphasizes that what is new about the so-called new social movements isn't a struggle for inclusion or representation but rather “a conflict or antagonism in the logic of the system” (1994, 107), where “antagonism lies in the ability to give a different name to space and time by developing new languages that change or replace the words used by the social order to organize our daily experience” (123). In this way, the NSM movements also identify the tension around a possible changing set of political relations and an inability to make sense of such changes has been articulated in the past thirty or so years through literatures diagnosing and describing the “new social movements” (for example, Melucci 1989, 1992, 1994; Touraine 1981, 2004).

¹⁰³ Hardt and Negri's 2017 text, *Assembly*, expands on this problematic, particularly taking up the question of pluralized subjectivity and leaderlessness. I discuss this text in the concluding section of the dissertation.

kind of narration that produces new subjectivities and new languages” (211). There is thus a pluralization of subjectivities into the multitude through practices of dissent.

In describing the concept of the multitude, Hardt and Negri set out a classificatory scheme of subjectivity-forming (and dissenting) collectivities from which their concept is to be distinguished: the people, the masses, the working classes, the crowd, and the mob.¹⁰⁴ The multitude is a form of collective or plural political subjectivity produced through commonality that in turn “produces new forms of cooperation and communication, which in turn produce new subjectivity” (189). While the people is a “unitary conception” which “reduces diversity to unity” and thus creates a single entity, the multitude is multiple, many, “composed of innumerable internal differences.” These differences, by contrast, are “submerged and drowned in the masses.” The working classes, they argue, are too restrictive, separating not only workers and owners but also “the working class from others who work.” Thus, they note, the multitude is particularly effective in describing “social multiplicity” that nonetheless “acts in common while remaining internally different” (Hardt and Negri 2005, xiv). That is to say that there is a symbiotic process at play in this kind of subjectivity formation. In this sense, the multitude is not “fragmented, anarchical or incoherent” (99). The multitude is a collectivity of singularities, “an active social subject, which acts on the basis of what the singularities share in common” (100). The multitude thus retains the singular while acting collectively: its subjectivity is collective, while its subjects are singularities.

Hardt and Negri insist on multitude’s internal differences, its multiplicity and action based on commonality, as evidence that the multitude cannot act as sovereign

¹⁰⁴ Curiously, these classification practices – delineating and distinguishing between modes of subjectivity – suggest Eric Hobsbawm’s classification of early modes of political organizing in Europe, in his *Primitive Rebels* (1959).

(2005, 100). As Tampio explains, multitude is something between sovereignty and anarchy, a horizontalist political entity that does not require a leader, and that “banishes sovereignty from politics” (Tampio 2009, 389; Hardt and Negri 2005, 340). Yet, several readers have asked whether Hardt and Negri’s multitude in fact banishes *politics* from politics?¹⁰⁵ Laclau’s critique of Hardt and Negri’s framework is particularly salient, though he refers to multitude as it is described in *Empire*, where “the universality of [multitude as] the revolutionary subject entails the end of politics” (2004, 24). Through the concept of the multitude, Hardt and Negri advocate a kind of prefigurative politics as offering insight into questions of reform as an *ontological* problem. The multitude is ontological because it “creates a new social being, a new social nature” (2005, 348). This “biopolitical perspective,” they suggest, “can help us recognize the ontological character of all the movements and identify the constituent motor that drives each of them” (2005, 305). Yet, it is my sense that part of this manoeuvring effaces both a politics and a prerequisite *epistemology* of dissent. A prefigurative politics requires an epistemology, where the elaboration of a concept is itself political. It is thus necessary to underscore that the ontological character of movements that Hardt and Negri describe is very much a *political ontology*. My understanding of political ontology here is informed by that developed by Warren Magnusson in his *The Politics of Urbanism*. There, Magnusson describes two orientations to ‘political’ ontology. On the one hand, political ontology is a categorization of political institutions, movements, and ideas, what there is with regard to our definition of the political (2011, 2). On the other hand, and in addition to this statist version of an ontology of what counts as political, Magnusson describes a *political ontology*; that is to say, a political ontology that “conceals within itself a certain

¹⁰⁵ See for example, Alliez 2002, Laclau 2004.

orientation towards the things that it designates as political” (2011, 2). It is in this sense that I am suggesting that the ontological framing Hardt and Negri offer, positing the multitude as ontological basis for a reworked political subjectivity and global political order, tends to conceal within itself the ongoing normative politics at play in these processes. Not only this, as I will argue below, but the articulation of the multitude as both novel collective subjectivity and fundamentally immanent resisting subjectivity, nonetheless requires and accommodates many of modernity’s most reliable ideals, and, as such, remains caught up in its aporias.¹⁰⁶

New claims to new subjectivities in the 2009-2013 protests

Writing that after Francis Fukuyama’s declaration of “the End of History,” “[t]he rare large demonstrations in the rich world seemed ineffectual and irrelevant” (and writing off two decades of activism in the process), the editors of *Time* declared 2011 the “Year of the Protestor” (Andersen 2011). In the cover story, Kurt Andersen hits on most of the commonly celebrated characteristics of the protests, as discussed in the previous chapter of this text: their diversity in attracting the ordinary middle class citizens, their networked organizations of individuals and transnational communal solidarities, and, perhaps most significantly, the excitement around the novelty of the events and their transformative potential and consequences for those participating and observing them.

¹⁰⁶ An alternative formulation of the ‘multitude’ comes from Paolo Virno’s *The Grammar of the Multitude* (2004) arising more specifically from the Italian *autonomia* and *operaismo* movements. For Virno, drawing from a quasi-Heideggerian ontology and a critique of the state and capital, the ‘multitude’ is the shared experience of those who feel a kind of dread, a feeling of not being at home, of generalized dissatisfaction, an indeterminacy that is crucial to political experience. In this sense, the tone of Virno’s text is quite distinct from more celebratory articulations of the multitude like Hardt and Negri’s. At the same time, it is also primarily an ontological entity, “a fundamental biological configuration which becomes a historically determined way of being, ontology revealing itself phenomenologically” (Virno 2004, 98, qtd in Marasco 2006). As Marasco puts it, Virno refuses “to mythologize a new revolutionary subjectivity, tracing instead the ambivalence which inheres in the multitude and the potentialities opened up by revolutionary defeat” (2006), focusing specifically on *forms* of subjectivity in all of their instabilities, uncertainties and aporias.

Andersen is not quite hyperbolic, but certainly elevated in his description of the significance of the protest events of 2011:

2011 was unlike any year since 1989 – but more extraordinary, more global, more democratic, since in ‘89 the regime disintegrations were all the result of a single disintegration at headquarters, one big switch pulled in Moscow that cut off the power throughout the system. So 2011 was unlike any year since 1968 – but more consequential because more protesters have more skin in the game. Their protests weren’t part of a countercultural pageant, as in ‘68, and rapidly morphed into full-fledged rebellions, bringing down regimes and immediately changing the course of history. It was, in other words, unlike anything in any of our lifetimes, probably unlike any year since 1848, when one street protest in Paris blossomed into a three-day revolution that turned a monarchy into a republican democracy and then – within weeks, thanks in part to new technologies (telegraphy, railroads, rotary printing presses) – inspired an unstoppable cascade of protest and insurrection in Munich, Berlin, Vienna, Milan, Venice and dozens of other places across Europe, as well as a huge peaceful demonstration of democratic solidarity in New York that marched down Broadway and occupied a public park a few blocks north of Wall Street. How perfect that the German word *Zeitgeist* was transplanted into English in that unprecedented, uncanny year of insurrection (Andersen 2011).

The piece continues by describing this *zeitgeist*, animated by brief individual profiles, the communications strategies that have brought the people together and to the streets, and the overwhelming global transformations these events have engendered. These transformations involve a personal, a subjective dimension. Writing of the *Indignados*, Andersen quotes Olmo Galvez in Madrid, who helped set up and run the protest’s social media networks: “It was marvelous to see people become the actors in their own lives,” he says. ‘You could watch them breaking out of their passivity’” (Andersen 2011). The transformations celebrated here are of active political agents, working together as individuals (and profiled as individuals). Thus, while the text ultimately takes a ‘realistic’ turn to note that as the protests have “rejuvenated and enlarged the idea of democracy, the protesters, and the rest of us, are discovering that democracy is difficult and sometimes a little scary” (Andersen 2011), the framing of the “Person of the Year: The Protestor” is

itself a compelling commentary on the question of political subjectivity. In following a number of figures involved in protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Spain, Greece, and the US, with an emphasis on social networks, online organization in the growth of protests and an ‘everyman’ quality of protestors, the text is both a nod to collectivity and networked identity, and yet, an insistence on the individual, the singularities and differences that make up the collective.

Writing from an Eastern European perspective, Ivan Krastev of the Sofia Center for Liberal Strategies notes that it is the massive scale of the 2013 protests, as well as the diversity of the participants that distinguish them from previous events, especially in places like Bulgaria and Turkey which had not seen such massive protest events in decades. For Krastev, what explains the protests has to do with the identities and aspirations of the protestors. They are, he suggests, the libertarian middle classes and the aspirational middle classes. These groups assert their subjectivity “at the very moment when they lack the opportunity to make big political choices” (2015, 74). That subjectivity is, Krastev argues, fundamentally about disruption, a different way of “being in the world” engendered through a public performance of communal protest. Further, these are affective subjectivities, “an explosion of moral indignation” (2014, 3) that emerges through affect, as discussed in the previous chapter.

It is important to note that for Krastev, it is the relation between collective and individual that is significant here, as it appears to be for Castells and for journalist Paul Mason as well. It is *through* the communal that individual subjectivities are transformed and reasserted, rather than a question of an explicitly plural subjectivity. Mason notes that “what is going on is also about the expanded power of the individual.” Drawing from Castells’ work in network theory, Mason posits “[t]he rise of the networked individual”

and “the power of social networks to alter consciousness,” drawing together the drive for individual autonomy and online network use (131). Castells himself argues that the new subjectivity emerging from the networks through which horizontal organization flourished *is* the network, where “the network became the subject” (2012, 129). In this claim, the tension between the desire for a new plural subjectivity (a network as subject, something akin to the singularities in multitude) and the desire for the ideals of autonomous subjects (through the networked individual) becomes apparent. While Mason celebrates “[t]he rise of the networked individual, the multiple self, the ‘leaky self’ and the collective consciousness” as challenging “some basic assumptions of liberalism, which has assumed the self to be singular and self-contained” (2013, 141), within the selves he enumerates, there remains the modern relation of the one and the many, the universal and particular which is reasserted but not revolutionized.

Before turning to an explicit comparison of the protest commentaries examined thus far and more theoretical examinations of the persistence of the modern political subject, it is worthwhile to bridge these discussions with an example of an analogous scholarly commentary on the emergence of new political subjectivities through the recent protests. While a substantial scholarly literature on the 2009-2014 wave of protests has emerged, comparatively little of it has focused on the question of subjectivity.¹⁰⁷ Andreja Zevnik’s “Maze of Resistance: Crowd, Space and the Politics of Resisting Subjectivity” is a compelling exception, both identifying the tensions within articulations of novel politics and novel subjectivities in the recent wave of protests, and developing an argument for a different form of plural subjectivity, through a reading of the crowd.

¹⁰⁷ A notable exception is *Globalizations*’ Special Issue on “Occupying Subjectivity: Being and Becoming Radical in the Twenty-First Century” (2015), from which the Zevnik piece I discuss is drawn.

Responding to Lacan's much quoted injunction to student protestors in Paris (May 1968) – “What you aspire to as revolutionaries is a new Master. You will get one” (Lacan 1977, 24 qtd. Zevnik 2014, 102) – and Zizek's argument that revolutions do not necessarily institute new political orders, Zevnik cautions that the excitement that accompanies massive direct action is temporally limited, and may not necessarily “change politics, re-define political space or re-write the political practices producing it” (2014, 102).

At the same time, Zevnik suggests that the excitement of recent mass gatherings does produce a new political subjectivity, specifically a “new ‘resisting political subjectivity’” – and specifically a new “form” of resisting subjectivity (103). This form of resisting subjectivity, the crowd, rests on a specific relationship with the *spaces* of resistance and the *bodies* in those spaces. The relationship between spaces and bodies, Zevnik suggests, “can bring about a new way of engaging with oppressive politics and thinking political contestations otherwise” (103). The crowd is a pluralized subject akin to but distinct from the multitude – the crowd doesn't differentiate, but is also made of differences coming together in a particular space. The crowd “thinks through the body rather than reason and prefers images to ideas and words” (106). Here, Zevnik emphasizes the emotional connections of shared space, where the resistance to sovereign orders is formed through shared emotions. The crowd as expression of dissent does not attempt permanence, but in linking space as “place of common experience” it creates a collective as a political subjectivity, redefining the limits of what it means to be a political subjectivity though a common affect of love and desire for the good (111).

The appearance of resisting bodies makes the common visible within the space of protest, where the body – the crowd – in its appearance “makes a claim for the space and for a political recognition that cannot remain ignored” (112). Zevnik describes a common

understanding of modern political subjectivity as the relationship between the individual and the sovereign where both are constituted in a hierarchical relationship based on exclusions and inclusions (112). She contrasts this to the constitution of the crowd as a plural political subject, where the other becomes the self, rather than the sovereign or authority. The crowd challenges individual subjectivities created through a relation to authority. Yet, it is important to note that while one common understanding of modern political subjectivity involves the constitution of subjects in relation to sovereign authority, this understanding (especially in its Kantian articulations) also involves the constitution of the subject in relation to *itself*, through the courage to “dare to know,” and emerge from its “self-incurred immaturity” (Kant 1991, 54) to govern itself, within the necessary limits set on its reason for the orderly functioning of political society. While the subject creates itself as autonomous and free, it is only within these limits that subjectivity is possible. While pluralizations of subjectivity temporarily challenge the organization of political order, it is also crucial to ask whether pluralized subjectivities are necessarily incompatible with the modern rational subject who acts politically. If not, it then becomes necessary to think the material commons, crowds, multitude in relation to the *principle* of the modern political subject and ask some difficult questions. These difficult questions are addressed in more detail below.

The central ideals of the Enlightenment form of subjectivity, the injunctions to think for oneself, to make oneself, are pluralized, but many of the formal moves through which these ideals are realized remain, especially in the emphasis on shifting consciousness. Zevnik hits on the difficult position of contemporary protests vis-à-vis novelty and subjectivity. She writes that “[i]t seems as if the old ways of resistance have met their end, and new ways have not quite come in place” (101). She nonetheless

suggests that through the space of the protest, the space and bodies of the crowd, a new form of subjectivity is appearing. While I agree and remain optimistic, in principle, I think it's also necessary to consider how instantiations of 'new' subjectivities may or may not be compatible with very old understandings of political subjectivity, both individualized and collective. It is to the question of shifting consciousness as one such point of compatibility that I now turn.

Enlightenment thought and the question of shifts in public consciousness

The novel politics and subjective transformations celebrated in the commentaries discussed above (and many others) are not only thought through an emotional movement associated with dissent (whether through the movement from outrage to hope, moral indignation, or the emergence of communal love, as discussed in the previous chapter) but also through the theorization of a shift in public consciousness, a kind of awareness raising that shifts perceptions and thus reorients ways of being. For Castells, "what is truly decisive in assessing the political effect of a social movement is its impact on people's consciousness," indicating that, for example, the effect of OWS in America is in its shaping of Americans' awareness of class struggle (2012, 194). For Krastev, consciousness raising is an almost religious experience where protestors describe "how the experience of acting out on the street has inspired a revolution of the soul and a regime change of the mind" (2014, 4). Mason links questions of consciousness to network technology – it is the digital platforms themselves (social networks, blogs, Twitter etc.) that constitute a collective consciousness, where one may "try and insert spin or propaganda, but the instantly networked consciousness of millions of people will set it right: they act like white blood cells against infection so that ultimately the truth or something like it, persists much longer than disinformation" (2013, 77). For Graeber,

Occupy suggests a changing consciousness that takes place through the experience of direct organizing, and coming together to share the space of dissent. At the same time, Graeber emphasizes that, for the observer, there is also an imperceptibility of changed forms/modes of political engagement.

I think Graeber is correct in emphasizing this imperceptibility of changing forms. Graeber notes that practices of dissent have broadened the imaginable possibilities of those participating in them and experiencing “self-organization, collective action, and human solidarity” (2013, epub). These practices, Graeber argues, are life changing (2013, epub). More broadly, the “revolution in common sense” that Graeber calls for can be read as a kind of changing consciousness. While Graeber distinguishes this argument from past revolutions in the form of violent insurrections and uprisings, it is strikingly similar to, one, the call of Enlightenment thinkers to think for one’s self, rather than through the command of the sovereign and, two, Marxist-influenced theorizations of the formation of the collective subject in the form of the people or the working class, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this text. While arguably the perceived consequences of the articulation of a consciousness shift enable a profound transformation, the move itself is a reproduction of the progressive desires of the modern political subject, on the one hand, and the collective revolutionary subject on the other.

In a late essay entitled “What is revolution?” (1983), Foucault reflects on Kant’s characterization on the consequences of revolutionary events in “The Conflict of the Faculties,” where Kant notes that the significance of revolutionary events is not in how they overturn empires or transfer powers. Instead, Foucault writes that the significance of revolutionary events is most astute for those who observe them, the spectators who are taken up by the event and changed by it (2007, 89-90). There is a question of enthusiasm,

a “sympathy of aspiration” where those who do not directly participate cultivate a relationship to the event, *as if* they are active agents. As Foucault puts it, “[t]he enthusiasm for the Revolution is the sign, according to Kant, of humanity’s moral predisposition” (2007, 91), for Kant, the intrinsic faculties of the political subject. Kant’s argument echoes in Castells’ reading of the consciousness-transforming power of the protests. He writes that:

[t]he actual goal of these movements is to raise awareness among citizens at large, to empower them through their participation in the movement and in a wide deliberation about their lives and their country, and to trust their ability to make their own decisions in relation to the political class (236).

Yet, at the same time, Foucault expresses skepticism about the question of shifting consciousness through revolution. In “For an Ethics of Discomfort,” he offers a prescient analysis of the problem of positing a shifting shared consciousness as a problem of universalization. Though experiences of dissent are often based on “approximately shared ideals, according to analogous forms of organization and in a vocabulary that can be understood from one culture to another,” one should not deduce from this a universalization of thought. Thus while there may be a “globalization of the economy” and a “globalization of political calculations,” these do not mean a “universalization of political consciousness” (2007, 125).

In a 1971 interview published under the title “Revolutionary Action: Until now,” Foucault explicitly repudiates the suggestion that dissent or protest is about consciousness raising, and addresses the question of the effects of media commentaries head on, writing that:

[i]f it were a question of raising consciousness, we could simply publish newspapers and books, or attempt to win over a radio or television producer. We wish to attack an institution at the point where it culminates and reveals itself in a simple and basic ideology, in the notions of good and evil, innocence and guilt (1977, 228).

While one may infer from the quotation and the date of the interview that Foucault is here referring to the development of his genealogical studies of disciplinary institutions, he is also arguably alluding to a need to examine the conceptual issues present in any claim to understand or describe an event. Raising consciousness through explanation of the event proves inadequate if one does not delve into the epistemological frameworks through which these claims are made. In part, this is related to the problem of the imperceptibility of the present, a problem identified in the previous chapter. As Foucault notes in “What is Revolution?”, the problem of interpretation in diagnosing a changing present is that our concepts and conceptual forms may indeed be inadequate to the task: “We cannot analyse our own present in terms of these significant values without recodifying them in such a way that they will allow us to express the important meaning and value we are seeking for what, apparently, is without meaning and value” (2007, 89-90). There is thus, again, a problem of rearticulating novel events through old concepts – a lack of available language to articulate the shift in consciousness so identified. Further, in the conclusion to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault suggests that there is a type of existential fear in discussing epistemological questions in terms of consciousness, a question of a desired “great historico-transcendental destiny of the Occident” (2002, 231) in the form of the modern subject. Is this a shift in consciousness, that term so widely and deeply discussed and desired by activists and revolutionaries alike, or is it something that we cannot, as Ian Hacking noted of Foucault’s own lack of articulation of an alternative to the modern subject, a problem of “no surrogate for whatever it is that springs eternal in the human breast” (2002, 86).

It is in this sense that it is important to review the two questions Foucault identifies as key to thinking about the condition of the present: “What to do with the will for revolution?” and “What is *Aufklärung?*” (2007, 94). These two questions link knowledge, classification, dissent, and subjectivity. In doing this, they also highlight the reflexivity of all such reflections and movements. A sense of reflexivity is apparent in the framing of the commentaries themselves. Opening *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, Castells refers to his own “confused activism” in both optimistically participating in some of the events he describes, and attempting to interpret them (2012, xii). Like Castells, Mason highlights his own emotional investment, writing that “[t]here is a great river of hope flowing, and all I am trying to do is dip my fingers in it” (2013, 4). Similarly, Graeber narrates his participation in the OWS protests in New York reflexively – commenting extensively on his own position as a participant and as a veteran anarchist activist (2013). As Inanna Hamati-Ataya suggests, this type of academic observer reflexivity is endemic to the experience of modern subjectivity (2013, 28). This is the question of our assessment of who we are in the present that animates Enlightenment and modern thought. As Foucault put it, “philosophy as the problematization of an actuality and the philosopher’s questioning of this actuality to which he belongs in relation to which he has to position himself, may very well characterize philosophy as a discourse of and about modernity” (2007, 85). Yet, as the initial chapter of this dissertation has asserted, and as I will explain in more detail in the next section of this chapter, it is precisely this reflexive self-awareness that also forms the limits of self-awareness.

The desire to critically explain the event, and through this explanation, transform one’s self, is the Kantian desire for the Enlightened modern subject, the autonomous free subject who is nonetheless bound by the limits of his conceptual thought. The awareness

of this singularity, of this recursive finitude, breeds subjective anxieties of the kinds diagnosed by various thinkers from Nietzsche to Weber to Arendt, to Foucault and a proliferation of contemporary analyses. Indeed, this anxiety was very much apparent in Kant's own struggles around subjectivity and critique as reflexive questioning of subjectivity. As Hamati-Ataya puts it, there is a problem of identification vis-à-vis claims to critique, a question of the ipseity which both requires critique and is bounded by it, where “[y]our critique is either critique or it is yours” (29). So it is that what remains to be critiqued is always “that which cannot be grasped” (30). The critique of critique, and the turning of critique – of the subject – upon itself is thus the paradox of reflexivity. This is the problem of form, which Foucault identified so clearly, and so devastatingly, at the close of *The Order of Things*, as described in Chapter One. For now, perhaps it will suffice to underscore the problem of reflexivity Hamati-Ataya identifies as indicative of many of the hopes and desires for resistance, emancipation and transformation that contemporary protests have expressed. To put it another way, the problem of reflexivity reveals the co-implications of our desires for order (form) and change (revolution, dissent, protest) as an epistemological and ontological aporia. It is worth quoting Hamati-Ataya at length here:

Order and Change – are they not mere correlatives? How can we conceptualize a future change that breaks with past order that cannot be defined through the known? Those real ‘revolutions’ we fantasize about, those are the ones that defeat our consciousness, for they transcend the identity of the Same’s ‘other,’ and throw us into an *other* ‘other’ that cannot be defined, that can only be lived without consciousness, like an existential unknown, a burden of renewed ignorance. … The real ‘turn’ will be an epistemic *singularity*, wherein the past – and our memory of it – will become irrelevant to the *new order of things* (2013, 33).

Here, Hamati-Ataya both addresses the problem of conceptualizing novel forms through old concepts, but also the question of the possible imperceptibility of the novel *through*

our accepted orders of understanding – through recourse to the modern reliance of shifting consciousness at all. In doing this, she emphasizes the significance of thinking the question of dissent – and through it, the fate of the dissenting subject – as an epistemological problem.

As the discussion thus far has indicated, I am suspicious of recent arguments that describe the emergence of novel, often pluralized subjectivities, through recent protests. Rather, I suggest that many of these arguments are bound up with the understanding of political subjectivity emerging from the European Enlightenment, a form of subjectivity that can accommodate many variations in substance, and with variations on early twentieth century pluralizations of the modern subject, as exemplified by Lukács and Gramsci and discussed in Chapter Two. That is to say that while the thinkers of protest I examine are keen observers, they are, arguably, bound up with a desire to realize the orders long promised as the fate of the modern subject. To this end, in the next section I will spell out the epistemological conditions through which we must think the relationship between dissent and subjectivity.

The contemporary status of the subject and the principle of subjectivity

In “What is Enlightenment?”, Foucault sets up the contemporary status of the subject in relation to our Enlightenment inheritances, writing that if we wish to understand ourselves, “We must try to proceed with the analysis of ourselves as beings who are historically determined, to a certain extent, by the Enlightenment” (2007, 120). Foucault’ study is oriented towards the limits through which our subjectivity is formed, “the ‘contemporary limits of the necessary,’” or what is no longer completely necessary for how we imagine and create ourselves as autonomous subjects (120). In this way, Foucault both points out the possibility of shifting subjectivities, but also emphasizes the

necessity of engaging with this possibility through the limits of our knowledge, historically determined. This is what Foucault refers to as “the historical ontology of ourselves” that, while not my explicit focus here, is important to highlighting the intersections between Enlightenment forms of subjectivity and ways in which we interrogate them. The historical ontology of ourselves, Foucault maintains, requires a critical questioning that reflects my concerns here: “[h]ow are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge? How are we constituted as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations?” (117). In other words, what is the relationship between our understanding of our subjectivity and our desires to change that subjectivity through practices of dissent as an expression of power relations?

More broadly, the question “What is Enlightenment?” links the historical ontology of ourselves to the question of the diagnosis of the present – the novelty and distinctiveness of the present, as discussed in the previous chapter. The questions of and for the critical attitude of the Enlightenment: the question of knowledge – “the conditions under which true knowledge is possible” – and the question of the present – “What is an actuality? What is the present field of possible experiences?” (2007, 100) are linked to the questions of dissent and subjectivity. It is in this sense that I think about the recent protests – they have been sites where significant commentaries have been made on the diagnosis of a novel global present – where novel politics and novel political subjectivities may be emerging, yet both this question of novelty, the modern desire for novelty and its attendant forms of subjectivity, function to replicate the aporetic political conditions through which, perhaps, the protests emerged. In part, I would like to suggest, these aporias exist as a consequence of the inadequacy of the conceptual tools we have to

examine shifting global presents,¹⁰⁸ the specific linguistic trappings at our disposal to dissent. To examine this question as it relates to the problem of shifting subjectivities in contemporary protests, I turn again to a brief examination of Nandy's thought on the insidiousness of the categories of Enlightenment for thinking both a global present and any kind of emancipatory subjectivity.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Nandy offers a challenge to Enlightenment modes of subjectivation and dissent on the basis of Enlightenment systems of knowledge. Nandy underscores the ways in which the modern understanding of dissent itself is a kind of critique built into the structures of modern knowledge, "a prototypical pathology of the Enlightenment vision of the human future," where "modern scientific rationality has 'absolute priority over democratic rights and over the subjective and objective experiences of man-made suffering'" (1989, 269). Resistance and dissent, especially in those parts of the world outside the West, Nandy stresses, is also resistance to modernity and resistance to the concepts through which we understand our times (1987, 117). To this end, Nandy argues that:

[t]he recovery of the other selves of cultures and communities, selves not defined by the dominant global consciousness, may turn out to be the first task of social criticism and political activism and the first responsibility of intellectual stock-taking in the first decades of the coming century... radical dissent today constantly faces the danger of getting organized into a standardized form (1989, 265).

While Nandy is here perhaps more specifically referring to the failures of Indian Marxist activism in the context he is writing in, it is also possible to read this claim more broadly, around the ways in which contemporary modes of resistance face the threat of not only

¹⁰⁸ A related problem, beyond the scope of this chapter, is the transposition between epistemology and action. See, for example, Walker 1988, 1994.

the limits of language in expression, but also the threat of co-optation in the critical interpretation of dissent.

In this way, Nandy calls attention to the significance of observation and commentary in thinking about dissent and subjectivation. He emphasizes the question of reflexivity – here, the position of the commentator or critic – as itself an aspect of the critique of the specifically modern forms of subjectivity required for audible dissent. As Defteros puts it, it is important to ask, “How are the shadows or latent anti-modern selves that frequent Nandy’s work and threaten to disrupt ‘dominant and homogenizing accounts of subjectivity and human experience, worked through in the voice of the modern critic?’” (2013, xi). This aim is part of Nandy’s broader conception of the relationship between dissent, politics and subjectivity where, “not only must politics work with – and work out – the contradictions in human subjectivity, that subjectivity in turn concretizes, perhaps better than any action, the state of politics of society” (1980, vii). In the next section, I review Foucault’s archaeological study of the figure of Man as modern subject as one way to discuss the epistemological and political structures through which these contradictions in human subjectivity (in the modern forms we tend to think of it) play out.

As discussed in detail in Chapter One, the emergence of the figure of man as both subject and object of knowledge, is also the emergence of man as a deeply aporetic figure whose finitude is the limit that enables the possibility of imagining an infinite growth of knowledge. Yet, Man is, as Gutting has put it, “both experiencing subject and the never fully understood (indeed, always somehow misunderstood) object of that experience” (1989, 203). Indeed, as Han explains, the “ambiguous, but purely epistemological” position of the modern, Kantian subject, as the basis *for* knowledge, is also “*immutable in*

its very instability" (2005, 199). Insofar as the figure of Man is located as the basis of modern order, in the ambiguity of the birth of man, there is also his death. Yet, as the reading of contemporary protest commentaries above suggests, part of the cycle of the Man as modern subject is in the desire *for* the autonomous, self-determining ideals that the figure of Man cannot provide. The "elimination of man as the ruling category of our thought" would mean not a subjective shift – a pluralization, democratization, emancipation and so on – but an *epistemic* shift in our understanding of knowledge itself. Man, Hamati-Ataya notes, is the "Archimedian point" of the modern Western episteme and his simultaneous promise and instability instills a profound anxiety in us. This anxiety, furthermore, is an anxiety around the maintenance of the subject as the basis of our knowledge. Here, the questions of subjectivity, dissent and knowledge again intersect in the desire for a different set of relationships than those of the modern epistemological order. It is worth quoting Hamati-Ataya at length:

We, the children of this Western *episteme* whose attempts to resist only strengthen more tragically, owe Michel Foucault the most painful but perhaps also the most liberating of all awakenings – the understanding that 'man' is not only a recent creation but also a very peculiar, singular one.... Painful, too, is the prospect of a future that might exist without the Subject, without our consciousness and without our sovereign subjectivity... Perhaps we find too hideous the gnawing vision of an existence where all things and species, including us, would continue to simply *be* without our creative power to name and tame them, to anoint them with a supremely humanistic value – *what kind of life would be left without man's ability to infuse order into the world?* (2013, 34 emphasis mine).

Thus, when Han suggests that perhaps the "solution" to "the anthropological dilemma" might be "in the definition of a new position of the subject, which could reincorporate the demand for the transformation of the self" (2005, 198), for all of my own modern desires for subjective transformation, I cannot but remain skeptical. On the one hand, the modern subject enables an order of thought whose transformation, as I have argued, we may not

be able to imagine from within, ‘from here,’ and, further, one we cannot *afford* to imagine if we wish to continue to hope for its promised fate. On the other hand, as I’ll discuss below, the formal dimensions of the modern, as it anchors an epistemological and political order, are quite flexible and accommodating of *certain types* of transformations, shifts and pluralizations.

As the recent protests – and significantly, many commentaries on them – have demonstrated, there is a deep desire for a subjective shift in and through practices of dissent. This desire is, in part, a desire for the intersubjective connection that the idealized version of the modern subject as autonomous, rational, self-determined, evinces. For instance Hardt and Negri’s multitude is a collectivity of singularities, where the sharing of space and story enables the emergence of a plural political subject. Indeed, in articulating the structure of the modern subject through the critiques and putting it to work in his political writings, Kant struggled with the intersubjective dimensions of the modern subject, eventually settling on the concept of man’s “unsocial sociality” as the means through which necessary developmental “antagonism” within society “becomes in the long run the cause of a law-governed social order” (1991, 44). For Kant, man must be both individual and social; both social and political. Put formally, Kantian subjectivity is part of a particular epistemological, social and political system – it is the *principle* of subjectivity, but it is *only* the principle in relation to others. As Walker puts it, “all modern practices of subjectivity and subjectivization, presume correlative practices of externalization and objectification. Subjectivities presume objectivities, or perhaps intersubjectivities” (2016, 18). Yet, the *internal* structure of subjectivity makes it very difficult to imagine or propose:

any future political possibility without falling back into self-defeating clichés predicated on a mapping of a modern world divided into distinct

spatiotemporal realms of autonomous subjectivity that may or may not be desirable, and open to formalization as political principle and strategy of emancipation, but are certainly at odds with the relational necessities of human existence (Walker 2016, 7).

At the same time, the principle of modern subjectivity, as it underpins modern political order, is based on a logic that enables a form of universal self-determining subject at the same time as many specific, or particular, subjectivities, authorized in various ways. As I have argued above, there are many particular ways in which particular subjectivities shift and proliferate in and through assertions of novel spatiotemporalities and novel political practices. My concern is that while subjectivities might proliferate, the principle of subjectivity – the universal form which enables many particularities – is a much more persistent subject.

To understand why this should be the case, it is helpful to turn to Walker's articulation of the principle of subjectivity as both universal and particular.¹⁰⁹ Here, Kant's philosophy (and its subsequent affirmations in political life) of self-making autonomous subjects challenges claims to universal or transcendental community, while at the same time enabling a space of ultimate connection within particular places (states), in this way separating (subjective) self from (objective, natural) world (Walker 1999, 179). This relationship, Walker contends, affirms a politics that plays off the relationship between particular and universal within the principle of subjectivity, politics that understands “‘disenchanted’ subjects as both citizen of particular statist jurisdictions and part of a broader humanity” (2016, 14). In this way, we can have one international system and many states, one universal and many particulars, where, indeed, the universal is guaranteed *within* the particular: “As a particular subject one may then (potentially)

¹⁰⁹ For more detailed readings of this theorization than I have the space to provide here, see Walker 2015 (especially chapter 1), 2010 (especially chapter 5), 1992 (especially chapter 8).

assume a statist citizenship; and as a statist citizen-subject one may consequently (and again potentially) assume the status of a human being affirmed by the international” (Walker 2016, 25). Viewed this way, the declaration of subjective shifts in the forms of pluralization, multitude, and so on, are subsumed as an inverse articulation of this principle of subjectivity, where the universality of the whole is guaranteed by its particular singularities, within the structure of modern subjectivity.

The formal structure of modern subjectivity, read through the figure of Man as subject and object of modern knowledge, and through the mobilization of this figure in political life, particularly in the structures of the modern international, thus suggests the need to re-affirm Han’s claim that the modern subject is “*immutable in its very instability*” (2005, 1999). Thus, asking the titular question of a twenty-five year old exhortation – “Who comes after the subject?” – turns out to be an absurd question. It can only be the subject itself, albeit in a multitude of variations.¹¹⁰

The problem of emancipation

In the final section of this chapter, I probe more specifically the question of the desired fate of the modern subject as rational, autonomous, self-determining: the question of freedom, or emancipation that underlies the practices of dissent I examine. Here, the affirmations of claims to shifting subjectivities through protests and the skepticisms to

¹¹⁰ Sergei Prozorov puts the problem slightly differently: “Recalling the title of the well-known anthology Who Comes after the Subject? (Cadava et al., 1991), one is tempted to answer: the subject him-, her- or maybe it-self.” For Prozorov, however, this is distinct from existing critiques/deconstructions of the political subject: “While the (post-)Foucauldian governmentality approach tends to emphasize subjectivation as a process of the subject being formed *in* the practices of government, the theory of the subject that we shall outline in this chapter emphasizes the formation of the subject *against* these practices” (34). Prozorov, rather than thinking through the formation of the political subject within a *dispositif*, positivity, episteme (and so on), works through a theory of the subject’s formation through a void, or exteriority. For more on this this, see his monograph: *Theory of the Political Subject: Void Universalism II* (2013).

any possibility of shifting *subjectivity* at all coalesce around the diagnosis of the present and the aspirations of the Enlightenment project.

For Castells, the protests are indeed a continuation of the Enlightenment project, a kind of re-statement and resetting of the ideals and aims of the Enlightenment, vis-a-vis a diagnosis of a novel present, a present of ‘new beginnings,’ which both recall the emancipatory spirit of the Enlightenment and develop it into a pluralized form, through the emergence of social movements as globally networked, yet built in specific spaces and through specific emotional narratives. As discussed above and in the previous chapter, Castells writes that these movements work through an acknowledgement of Enlightenment principles while at the same time pointing to their failures of extending the universal freedoms promised.

While Hamati-Ataya too recognizes that most contemporary forms of resistance or dissent function within the *episteme* of European modernity, she is skeptical of such hopes for emancipation, or, indeed, the question of emancipation itself as possible without its attendant subject. Thus, the more we critique and unpack the modern episteme, there is a “feeling of missing our target precisely as we take better aim at it...For what we intuitively understand as we embark on this journey that we hope will be one of ‘resistance’ and ‘emancipation,’ is that our endeavor is constantly and inevitably constrained by its own conditions of possibility” (2013, 28). The limits of ourselves as knowing subjects are such that we cannot know beyond our subjectivity; we cannot emancipate ourselves *from* subjectivity, because it is through the desire for emancipation that we are constituted as subjects.

For Krastev, the protests demand a freedom otherwise than the failed promises of political alternatives on offer, where “[p]rotesters are furious that their freedom does not

translate into a capacity to change aspects of their socioeconomic condition that they desperately want to change.” He suggests that in this sense, the 2013 protests are a replica of the failed protests of 1968. Yet, Krastev’s evaluations disclose a particularly rigid understanding of freedom. Krastev argues that the protests are “antipolitical” in their lack of ideology, plan or alternatives, being driven by images, celebrities, and “moral indignation.” An anti-institutional or anti-systemic protest, one through which the structures of modern political life come under question, is, for Krastev, an inadequate means through which to seek emancipation.

For Nandy, it appears that a politics of indeterminacy is itself a question of freedom, where the languages through which dissent is expressed often remain mired in quests for “for certitude and objectivist interpretations of the human enterprise” (Nandy 1989, 272). Yet, Nandy points out that freedom has always been negotiated through a mixture of “the certain and the uncertain, the clear and the unclear, the objective and the subjective, the rational and the nonrational” (272). This, for him, is not only a question of a shifting politics of knowledge which brings in the majority of the world’s people who have been excluded from it, but rather “a form of politics of knowledge which seeks to abridge the concept of human freedom itself” (272). Yet, as I have argued above, the form of politics of knowledge, as it is implicated in the structure of modern subjectivity proves a much more challenging proposition.

Contemporary pluralizations of subjectivity vis-a-vis protests are perhaps not moving away from Enlightenment ideals of the rational autonomous subject. The epistemological basis of this chapter, it is worth underlining, is the question of form: it’s become clear that, at least in part through recent and not so recent protests and practices of dissent, subjectivities are shifting and multiplying. The pervasive understandings of

modern and political subjectivity inherited from many of the usual canonical Western political theorists have been troubled in various ways throughout the 20th century. What I am not so certain about is whether, given the persistence of modern understandings of ontological, political, epistemological, and axiological understandings of dissent, there is not an underlying structural requirement for a particular kind of subject position about which we need to think more seriously.

Chapter 5: Aporetic alternatives and the authority of classification

Introduction

Tariq Ali begins the preface to the *Verso Book of Dissent* (2010) with the statement that “[d]issenting voices and rebellions against existing authority... form a global pattern” (Ali 2010, Preface). In so doing, he makes two immediately apparent key claims: first, he highlights the centrality of the question of authority to any expression of dissent or rebellion; and second, he indicates that expressions of dissent can be connected to each other across the globe. That is to say, he suggests that there is some global commonality between spatially and temporally disparate events and practices. Taken together, these claims signal something like an argument for interconnecting radical movements across space and time – the *Verso Book of Dissent* is subtitled “from Spartacus to the Shoe-Thrower of Baghdad.” These claims also mark out a key orientation: against structures and figures of authority. At the same time, however, Ali further indicates at least two additional claims that are no less significant. First, the orientation to authority begs several further questions about processes of dissent and authorization: when and in what senses are expressions of dissent themselves claims to authority? How do *competing* claims to, and articulations of, authority play out in practices of dissent? Why is this significant? Second, Ali’s preface, and indeed, the *Verso Book of Dissent* itself, take their subject – the expression of dissent – as given. Yet, recent (and not so recent) expressions of dissent have often been met with profound skepticism as to their political significance, both during the events and in assessing their outcomes. For instance, both the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movements and European anti-austerity movements, from their inceptions, have generated massive volumes of

commentary on their efficacy, significance, and failures, several of which have been discussed in the preceding chapters and will be further discussed below. Indeed, whether these events are “dissenting voices” or “rebellions” is itself a politically significant question. Not only this, but these nominations, or, more appropriately, classifications, are themselves authoritative in multiple ways, from their authorship and subject of expertise to their site and language of publication. Whether an event is discussed as an expression of dissent or a rebellion depends a great deal on the authority of the forces so classifying it, the authority of the concepts so classified, and the authority of the practice of classification itself.

In this chapter, I examine these intersecting practices of dissent, authorization and classification through the lens of commentaries on some of the recent expressions of dissent mentioned above, specifically the wave of global protests from 2009-2013, with particular emphasis on exemplary commentaries on OWS. I am interested in these intersections both in the context of looking back at these movements from the decidedly more bleak political time of 2019 and as they might be articulated in relation to a broader critical historical cartography of dissent. As discussed in Chapter One, by critical historical cartography I mean the description of a space of a problem in a way that defines that problem as such. In the case of the problem of the relationships between authorization, dissent and classification, I am particularly interested in the relationship between claims to knowledge (as also claims to authority) and judgments about what counts as meaningful dissent. Through this examination, I demonstrate the significance of practices of classifying dissent as modes of *authorizing* specific descriptions, expressions and practices of dissent as political problems.

This argument will proceed in four parts. The first examines the question of demands-making as a component of protest movements, and its various positions to authority. The second takes up horizontalism or autonomous practices as alternative positions often taken up against more explicitly traditional reformist or revolutionary aims. The third argument takes up responses to the second, laying out a critique of horizontalism or autonomous practices, before taking up a more explicitly large-scale, structural approach to the question of alternatives, associated with Marxist-inspired or “accelarationist” approaches. Finally, I suggest that each of the above positions does not take the problem of classification seriously enough; I argue that the authority of classification is a crucial form of authorization that must be taken into account in understandings and practices of dissent. Further, I argue that it is not only the forms and concepts associated with the practices and languages of dissent I describe, but rather the *relation* between forms that is standardized and standardized as a form of self-authorizing and as orientation to structures of authority.

Imperatives and refusals to make demands have offered exemplary cases through which to examine questions of authority in practices of dissent. This has particularly been the case in debates during OWS. To make demands, some have argued, is to speak the language of the state and, perhaps, to classify and close down the politics in these practices of dissent.¹¹¹ What might it mean to demand better representation? To demand transparency and accountability? To voice such claims, these arguments suggest, is to capitulate to the frames of authority that the protest is rejecting. However, to refuse to make demands is itself a claim to authority, in the refusal to engage in the language of the state and, as commentators and horizontalist activists claim authority by disengaging

¹¹¹ See, for instance, Roos 2013, Ardit 2012, Mills 2011, Graeber 2011, discussed in more detail below.

mainstream structures and creating alternative communities. Further, to make demands may be strategically necessary, and the refusal naïve, some have suggested.¹¹² This relationship between classification and engagement with authority, on the one hand, and refusal and claims to authority, on the other, is a familiar form of engaging practices of dissent. The classification of demands through claims to authority is familiar to us from the foundational revolutions of the European Enlightenment and their claims to a political order through freedom, equality, reason, property, and so forth. By contrast, dissent as a refusal to engage existing structures and disciplines of authority has historically been a powerful response to such claims. Consider, for instance, the Romantic philosophies that followed the assertion of Enlightenment ideals.¹¹³

Such a juxtaposition of forms of dissent – between making claims as a mode of authoritative classification and refusal to make claims as a disengagement from established authorities – forms the basis for the second and third parts of the argument. Here, I examine two major families of alternative approaches posited in relation to the global protest events of 2009-2013. One is the intensification of arguments around horizontalism, autonomous practices (as practiced through consensus politics) and spaces, and direct action, as alternatives to the hegemonic structures of contemporary political life, where direct action both seeks to empower those without access to conventional political institutions and thus enable potentials for social and political change that do not exist within the existing institutions (Bleiker 2000, 96-7).¹¹⁴ The

¹¹² Jodi Dean has frequently made this argument. See, for example, Desires and Dean 2012.

¹¹³ I take up a comparison of the relationship between Enlightenment and Romantic orientations to authority and dissent at the end of this chapter. For a longer discussion, see Bleiker 2000, 74-95. Another historical version of this problematic is in Marx's relationship to – and criticism of – utopian socialism. In Chapter Two, I discuss arguments that this distinction between Enlightenment and Romantic thought has been too sharply drawn and show that the thought of Gramsci, Lukács and Mannheim draws from both.

¹¹⁴ See, for instance, Day 2005, Graeber 2013, selected essays from alexandros Kioupkiolis and Giorgos Katsambekis 2014.

everyday life of the ‘movements in the squares’ (M15, Syntagma Square, OWS and so on) offered an instantiation of autonomous practices, which are also sometimes extended into arguments around temporary autonomous zones.¹¹⁵ Yet, these alternatives have also been criticized as romanticizing detachments from politics that, in refusing to engage the violence of state power, preserve it. Nick Srnicek’s and Alex Williams’ recent text, *Inventing the Future* (2015), makes such a critique.¹¹⁶ Srnicek and Williams argue that horizontalist or autonomous movements, in focusing on the local, the temporary, and the particular, cannot have substantive effects on the abstract global structures of capitalism. To this end, they propose an alternative that takes seriously the need to engage in structural analysis, to engage politics at an abstract level and, in so doing, to reclaim and revise the ideals of European modernity: freedom, universalism and modernity (and its attendant claims to progress) itself. This argument returns us to the question of classification. I suggest that not only do these concepts remain authoritative, but Srnicek and Williams’ argument rests on the authority of classification, and, particularly, the longstanding relationship between the alternatives of classification (and rationalization) as a form of dissent and romanticism as a form of dissent. I argue that *the relationship* between these two positions is a familiar historical form of engaging practices of dissent. It is the reproduction – albeit with a number of variations – of a relationship between competing *ideas* about dissent: ways of classifying forms and practices of dissent as expressing a limited set of possible alternatives. These limitations, I suggest, are due in part to how ideas about dissent are oriented towards authority. They are directed to the

¹¹⁵ See, for instance, Bey 1991, Day 2005, Feigenbaum, Frenzel and McCurdy 2013, *Prentoulis and Thomassen* 2013.

¹¹⁶ This text is an extension of Srnicek and Williams’ manifesto, “#Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics,” first published online in 2013 and available at: <https://syntheticedifice.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/accelerate.pdf>.

state, they authorize, and are themselves authoritative in their historical significance. As Ashis Nandy has suggested, it is only within certain registers or knowable classifications that dissent may be audible (1989). Here, I argue that the qualification of to whom dissent may be audible may be a more difficult problem than it first appears, one bound up with the authority of certain ways of knowing and, significantly, the standardizations of *relationships* between forms of dissent. What I'm suggesting is that perhaps the ways commentaries on recent protest events frame these events reproduces this very relationship in both the responses to authority and as itself, in a way, historically authoritative.

Demands-making, authority-taking?

While debates around how and whether protest movements should make demands of states and other authorities have been a part of discussions around dissent for centuries, these debates were particularly highlighted during and after the OWS movement in 2011-2012.¹¹⁷ While for some participants and observers, OWS's refusal to make demands was indicative of the movement's novelty, and perhaps a novel form of politics emerging from the movement,¹¹⁸ the refusal to make demands was, perhaps predictably, frequently criticized by the popular media, and perhaps somewhat less predictably, by leftist activists and academics. For instance, Deseriis and Dean argue that rather than a "conscious choice," OWS' refusal to make demands is an inability to come to a consensus and suggests that "far from being a strength, the lack of demands reflects the weak ideological core of the movement" (2012). Setting aside, for the moment, the

¹¹⁷ The same set of arguments was made in the context of 1960s protest movements. See Stephens 1998.

¹¹⁸ This was a set of arguments most often made by those interested in the prefigurative political aspects of the movement, and those veterans of earlier direct action and horizontalist movements in the late 1990s and early 2000s. See, for instance, Graeber 2013.

question of whether those involved in OWS were interested in postulating a strong ideological core, a brief narrative about the debate around demands-making in the OWS movement – and the various positions within it – can assist in elucidating the significance of this debate for questions of authority in practices of dissent. These positions signal, in various ways, a deference to authority for reform; a refusal to acknowledge existing structures of authority; and, a desire to consolidate demands for the transformation of the distribution of authority.

The question of demands – or rather, “one demand” – is highlighted in OWS’s official call to action from culture-jamming magazine *Adbusters* (2011). Taking inspiration from the Spanish *indignadas* movement’s leaderless “swarm of people” approach, the call stresses that in order for the movement to succeed, it must articulate and repeat “an uncomplicated demand” through a practice of town-hall style direct democracy, beginning on September 17, 2011. Indeed, the call-out suggests a demand – around the separation of corporate and government interests, most broadly – makes a case for this demand’s appropriateness, and solicits comments on other ideas. The idea for a demand is linked, in the initial call-out, to specific policy changes. These policy change ideas would be repeated by media commentators that themselves, within the first month of OWS, begin to participate in the movement, while also criticizing it by suggesting demands to protestors (for instance, the reinstatement of the Glass-Steagall Act and a three-strikes law for corporate crime). The *Adbusters* discussion is about an aim for a broad change in terms of governing, “*to make a better America*,” through the beginning of a coherent movement based on the repetition of one demand. However, as the suggestions for demands (and refusals of specificity) proliferated, so did the commentaries on ongoing events, often around the proliferation (or incoherence) of

demands. The kind of simplification that was initially suggested couldn't stick and generated numerous attempts to delegitimize OWS as a movement on those grounds (not "simple," not "clear," not "coherent," etc.).¹¹⁹

In the popular media commentaries skeptical of OWS as a movement, there was no disputing of claims of widening inequality and significant problems in banking and financial sector regulation, yet the argument was made that people in the streets cannot constitute a movement if they do not have a specific program of action. In the *New York Times*'s first significant coverage of OWS, in the NY Region section on September 23, Ginia Bellafante describes the movement's cause as "virtually impossible to decipher," with demands "for nothing in particular to happen right away," like specific policy changes such as "increased financial industry regulation" (Bellafante 2011).¹²⁰ A *Los Angeles Times* report emphasizes growing demands for demands from OWS supporters, "specific tangible goals," "specific demands," "a message" (Susman 2011). Into mid-October, the discourse of ambivalence around the growth and impetus for OWS and its uncertain direction continues (Hoffman 2011; Grossman 2011). The popular media's call for OWS to make demands focuses around a call to define OWS as a reform movement (rather than a perceived "mob" or even "revolutionary" movement) where, to be a political movement, the intent is to work through an established historical trajectory of the workings of reform movements as respecting and making claims on the authority of states.

¹¹⁹ For an in-depth analysis of both media commentaries on OWS and demand-making, and particularly on internal debates about demand-making from within the group at Zuccotti Park, see Kang 2013. Kang argues that in New York City, at least in part, the refusal to make demands was due to the structure of the consensus model and its influence by a particular group of participants in the early days of the protest.

¹²⁰ See Xu 2013 for a content analysis of the way the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* framed their coverage of OWS using marginalization devices including that of "ineffective goals."

By contrast, refusals to make demands in OWS took many forms and were made on many grounds. These included the potential divisiveness of demands and an accompanying suspicion of the representation required to make specific demands to authorities, as well as the fear that it is through the making of demands that the movement's broad reaching ethos could be co-opted, whether by the state, political parties, labour unions, or others. Nonetheless, as OWS reached a month, commentators began to report on responses from OWS on the question of demands, from attempts at articulating demands through the formation of a "Demands Working Group" (DWG), in early October, to the "Declaration of the Occupation of New York City," to refusals to engage in the discourse of demands making.¹²¹ Reports admitted that "the very nature of Occupy Wall Street [as nominally leaderless and decentralized] has made that task difficult, in New York and elsewhere" and, for many, the statement of discontent was enough, with the occupation itself as the point of the movement.

This question of the divisiveness of demands-making is crucial for many who refuse to make them. For instance, Nicolaus Mills writes that:

The refusal of Occupy Wall Street to tie itself down with an agenda that can be debated piecemeal is one of its great strengths. The decision allows Occupy Wall Street to remain a *cri de coeur* for all who believe they have lost ground over the last decade (Mills 2011).

These refusals sought to resist standardization and incorporation into prevailing categories of political order – "We are not going to become a political party" – and remain the "99%," without splintering (Grossman 2011). Indeed, for Graeber, it was the refusal to make demands, to standardize, that enabled the spread of OWS to at least 750

¹²¹ See Kang 2013 for a discussion of the Demands Working Group and responses to it in Zuccotti Park. See <http://occupytheory.org/list-of-demands-of-the-occupy-movement/> for a list of demands made by the DWG in Zucotti Park.

other cities (2013).¹²² It is also worth noting that in *post facto* reflections on OWS, the refusal to make demands was viewed as a successful tactic by many of those who took it up, as indeed a claim and shift of authority. On the one hand, this shift is in the authority that OWS resisted and in so doing “propelled a new diagnosis of power into the public discourse”: the power of capital rather than that of the state as primary (Roos 2013). On this account, making demands on the state is a futile exercise, where “for the 99% to become wound up in a political game whose rules were fixed by the 1% a long time ago, would imply becoming involved in the active process of defeating itself” (Roos 2013). On the other hand, perhaps more significantly, Roos argues that through the language of horizontalism, direct action, and prefigurative politics, OWS provided a “new political grammar and a radical vocabulary with which to reinvent [a] critique of global capitalism.” Through this, OWS “reset the parameters of public debate,” and put into question the authority of more dominant languages of dissent, like those long cultivated by leftist and labour movements throughout the twentieth century.

Nonetheless, both leftist and liberal progressivist media commentators, activists, and academics have been deeply skeptical of these arguments about OWS’s refusal to make demands. For instance, Srnicek and Williams argue that OWS’s consensus model of decision-making leads to a “lowest common denominator of demands,” if demands were made at all (Srnicek and Williams 2015, Chapter 2). Dismissing the proposition that the refusal to make demands is “a radical act,” Srnicek and Williams take OWS as exemplary of the failures of localized, tactical movements and frame their own position (discussed below) specifically through the language of demands which they describe as

¹²² For instance, see *The Guardian*’s ad hoc data collection on OWS events, published in November 2011: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2011/oct/17/occupy-protests-world-list-map>.

strategic rather than tactical. While not calling for demands as a means of acquiescing to established authority structures, leftist commentators do generally call for demands as a means of organizing, unifying, and representing the movement itself.¹²³ In a sense, the process of authorization at play in this formulation is that of the structures of demands-making themselves. This view is apparent in both progressivist commentaries during OWS, and in those examining the “failure” of the movement after the fact.¹²⁴ Glenn Greenwald writes that much of the progressive disdain for OWS is in “the belief that the only valid form of political activism is support for Democratic Party candidates in the United States, and a corresponding desire to undermine anything that distracts from that goal,” or, in other words, a narrow focus on the framing of American party politics as a totality of possible politics. Indeed, liberal progressivist critiques of OWS, as Greenwald describes them, appear to be focused largely around aspirations of efficiency and rationalization:

But much of this progressive criticism consists of relatively (ostensibly) well-intentioned tactical and organizational critiques of the protests: there wasn’t a clear unified message; it lacked a coherent media strategy; the neo-hippie participants were too off-putting to Middle America; the resulting police brutality overwhelmed the message, etc. etc. That’s the high-minded form which most progressive scorn for the protests took: it’s just not professionally organized or effective (Greenwald 2011).

Here, Greenwald emphasizes that an organized form (directed towards specifying demands) grows out of the initial “deficiencies” of the protest to “build structural planks” (Greenwald 2011). Thus, for both liberal progressivist and leftist critics and commentators, the often-repeated claim that “the protest is the process” is insufficient

¹²³ In so doing, they often refer to successful past revolutions – the French Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution, the American Revolution etc. – as organized around specific demands. See, for instance Hossein-Zadeh 2012; Srnicek and Williams 2015. A high level of structure and organization have historically been a major part of early 20th century Marxist/communist organizing. For debates around rationalization/bureaucratization and practices of Marxist-inspired practices of dissent, see Chapter Two.

¹²⁴ See, for example, Deseris and Dean 2013, Hossein-Zadeh 2012, Greenwald 2011.

and demands-making serves several important legitimating and consolidating functions, directed towards both internal and external forms of authority – towards both the structures of the state and those of radical movements themselves, which must acknowledge their own internal antagonisms. This is the case, for some leftist commentators, even if demands are issued: Deseriis and Dean suggest that “impossible demands,” i.e. demands that cannot be met without igniting a radical transformation of the system,” that show the system’s “inability to encompass much needed change” (2012) are one such way of eliding internal antagonisms. For them, as for other leftist commentators, in order to build a transformative, “revolutionary movement,” setting an agenda of demands and priorities is crucial. In other words, an organizational strategy based on demands is necessary for transformation.

The debates around demands-making in protest movements that took a particularly rigorous form during and after OWS, I suggest, are indicative of a broader set of problematics around questions of authority. While the positions rehearsed above, particularly those taken by those refusing to make demands from an autonomist position and those seeking to make demands on the basis of broad structural changes, indicate now standard orientations to questions of authority, I suggest that the broader problem is the *reproduction* of these orientations as such, albeit with certain variations, which I will discuss below. In reproducing long-standing orientations to questions of authority, these positions simultaneously reproduce a desire for an approach that seeks to classify the event through the making or refusing to make demands. These approaches are related, longstanding, and, I will suggest below, create a deadlock that reproduces itself. Below, I turn to longer discussions of both the horizontalist or autonomist positions and the leftist positions before concluding the chapter with an argument around the significance of the

authority of classification practices in framing relationships between possible alternatives articulated through and as the basis for dissent.

Autonomous authorities, authorizing detachments?

In a December 2011 interview, David Graeber comments that he finds the word protest problematic because “it’s part of a game where the sides recognise each other in fixed positions,” where “resistance is almost required to have power.” Instead, Graeber advocates the longstanding set of anarchist tactics encompassed under the umbrella of “direct action,” because “it means refusing to recognize the legitimacy of structures of power,” refusing forces of authority and “acting as if you were already free” (Evans and Moses 2011). Here, Graeber is both offering a condensed articulation of the project of horizontalist or autonomous politics and alluding to the prevailing protest tactics that emerged in the West in the 1960s: occupations, sit-ins, communes, and carnivalesque street protests, among others. Direct action, and the horizontalist practices with which it is associated are concerned with changing social relations from below, rejecting existing authority structures, and enabling conditions for self-government and autonomy.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ The work of Gene Sharp, particularly his *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973), has been especially influential to theories and practices of direct action. While Sharp’s work is formative for many activists and thinkers interested in radical forms of dissent against authorities of all kinds, as Roland Bleiker has pointed out, “Sharp’s approach to direct action expresses at the same time a widespread modern urge for certainty and control, the desire to ground our existence in an external source – if not in God, then in something else that could take over his stabilising position” (2000, 106). This stabilizing position, for Sharp, is taken up by the practice of classification. In *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, for instance, Sharp creates a typology of possible non-violent forms of conflict – “direct actions” – with multiple categories and over two hundred distinct forms of action, from speeches, to sit-ins, to strikes. In this way, as Bleiker explains, Sharp is able to put possible forms of dissent into place, and thus propose possible outcomes, from conversion to accommodation to disintegration. At the same time, however, this classification, as all classifications, creates an outside for all of those actions and events not included within it. In this way, then, while the horizontalist practices and theories associated with “direct action” may aim for prefigurative, or autonomous responses to modern forms of rational order as authoritative, in the urge to classify direct action, to make it orderly as both a form of dissent and as knowledge about dissent, they are very much internal to modern forms of dissent. A similar tension permeates David Graeber’s 2009 *Direct Action: An Ethnography*, a massive text encompassing participant-observation and documentation of alter-globalization protests centered around the Summit of the Americas Protests in Quebec City in April 2001. While over half of the text proceeds as a

In addition to direct action, horizontalism, as a dissenting orientation to and around authority, involves three other major tenets.¹²⁶ First, a rejection of domination in all forms; second, a commitment to consensus-based decision making; and third, a commitment to prefigurative politics. In each of these, there is an emphasis on the local and the particular, the present, and, perhaps, the temporary. While prefigurative politics seeks to instantiate a new world in the present – to live the alternative one wishes to see – consensus politics is committed to a direct democracy where the position of every community member is taken into account, thereby ensuring a community free from hierarchy and domination. Returning to the example of OWS will assist in examining the aims and dynamics of horizontalism as a refusal of dominant authority structures.

OWS's everyday tactics, and its early organizational practices, were animated by adherence to horizontalist processes. The much-discussed general assemblies, which developed their own sign language vocabularies of discussion, functioned on a non-hierarchical consensus basis, where anyone could forward an issue and anyone could block a motion from adoption; the working groups (on everything from health and sanitation, education, food and media) functioned together to create a pseudo-autonomous zone in the space of the occupation; and the actions taken by participants were neither directed centrally nor aimed at specific authority figures (as discussed in the previous section on the question of demands). Graeber's own *The Democracy Project* (2013) details the processes and programmes of horizontalist politics generally, and in the case of OWS specifically. Graeber describes OWS's strategy as one of "dual power,"

series of narratives, Graeber's analysis in the latter half, like Sharp's, relies on formulating a typology of actions, practices and strategies. See, particularly, Chapter 8.

¹²⁶ My clunky phrasing here is deliberate – I describe horizontalism as an "orientation to" because it addresses problem of authority; I also describe horizontalism as "around" because it rejects authority and seeks other kinds of relationships.

where the movement is “trying to create liberated territories outside of the existing political, legal and economic order, on the principle that that order is irredeemably corrupt” (2013). For Graeber, then, OWS’s major strategies were autonomy and delegitimization of the state. Similarly, Roos celebrates OWS for its ability to take on both standard reformist and revolutionary approaches to protest, and “its emphasis on radical equality and open-ended inclusiveness, and its revolutionary vision of the directly democratic urban commune” (2013).

For those committed to horizontalist practices as means of dissent – and dissent as a refusal of existing authority structures – OWS provided a key laboratory. OWS’ camps were described as instantiations of what Hakim Bey has called “temporary autonomous zones,” spaces of freedom from state control that open briefly as arenas for the performance of alternative futures in the present (1991).¹²⁷ As Richard J.F. Day describes them, TAZs both detach from given state authority, attempting to avert recognition by authority, but still “maintaining a parasitic (piratical) relationship with the dominant apparatuses of capture and exploitation” (2005, 163). Thus, TAZs enact “a place where the revolution *has actually happened*, if only for a few, if only for a short time” (163, emphasis in original). TAZs are both material and conceptual – in the spaces of occupation like those enacted by OWS, aims of autonomy from established authorities and non-hierarchical order are carried out on the ground, *as if* they are the norms; temporarily, they *are* the norms, enacting an alternative present Bey associates with a

¹²⁷ For longer readings of OWS camps as TAZs, see, for instance, Feigenbaum, Frenzel and McCurdy 2013; Tancons 2011.

“post-anarchist” present, rather than a utopian future. Indeed, Bey’s text *Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZs)*, is subtitled, “Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism.”¹²⁸

In similar ways, OWS’s horizontalist practices, their proponents argue, are both material and conceptual. In particular, OWS has been celebrated for bringing the vocabulary of autonomist practices, and specifically direct democracy, beyond activist spaces and into public debate (Roos 2013). Graeber argues that OWS was the site of both the emergence of new concepts and the revitalization of old concepts – “terms like realism, imagination, alienation, bureaucracy, revolution itself” (2007) – which laid “the groundwork for a genuinely democratic culture, and introduce[ed] the skills, habits, and experience that would make an entirely new conception of politics come to life” (2013, Chapter 1). Graeber has argued that a reconceptualization of “democracy” was OWS’s central achievement, and with it a revitalization of “the revolutionary imagination that conventional wisdom has long since declared dead” (2013, Introduction). This is a practical-conceptual problematic that Graeber has developed in greater detail in earlier texts: *Revolution in Reverse (or, on the conflict between political ontologies of violence and political ontologies of the imagination)* and *Direct Action: An Ethnography*.¹²⁹ Here,

¹²⁸ Bey later articulated a conception of “permanent autonomous zones” (PAZs) (Bey 1994). PAZs as autonomous spaces that are not ephemeral or temporary, like the OWS encampments or the movements in the squares. They are, rather, permanent autonomous spaces and communities not under the control of any social, political or religious authority. Like TAZs, they enact a prefigurative politics in the present, but are not clandestine. Examples may be permaculture collectives, free schools, or community gardens. Richard J.F. Day has taken up the question of TAZs (and SPAZs – semi-permanent autonomous zones) as the basis for a serious political alternative for a present of entrenched political possibilities (from “reform, revolution, creating alternatives, insurrection, movement-building, political parties, and so on” (Day 2015)). Day argues that the emergence and persistence of multiple TAZs around the globe postulate an alternative autonomous political order. Indeed, he has spoken of relationships between TAZs as the basis for this order (Day 2015). Yet, it must be noted that taking this claim of an alternative autonomous political order of TAZs may indeed be an alternative but it is also an aspiration to a kind of mirror of the existing ‘anarchical’ ‘international’ order. In an alternative autonomous global order of TAZs, like the international order, “the revolution has actually happened, *if only for a few, if only for a short time*” (163, emphasis added). Thank you to Regan Burles for this insight.

¹²⁹ Available in full online at <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/david-graeber-revolution-in-reverse.html>.

he argues that the political ontology of the imagination upon which leftist politics relies – the material creativity of production and insurrection – might be, and has been, productively rethought through the politics of direct action. In a testament to the significance of the revolutionary or radical imagination for his understanding of possibilities of alternatives through dissent written prior to the OWS events, Graeber concludes his massive *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (2009) with a chapter entitled “Imagination,” where he more fully theorizes his conception of the “political ontology of the imagination,” which he notes could also be called an ontology of creativity, invention and so on. The political ontology of imagination through which activists work is distinct from a “political ontology of violence” which is the operating basis for political authorities. Through a political ontology of imagination, creative powers, and questions of movement are emphasized. A political ontology of the imagination, in short, makes political movement, and thus political transformation, far more possible than a political ontology of violence.¹³⁰ Not only this, but a political ontology of the imagination is also an ontology where imagination is a kind of empathetic societal identification, the basis for what Graeber calls an “integrated subject” and society which enact direct action as daily life, “acting as if one is already free” (2009, 524, 527). Returning to Graeber’s reading of OWS, then. A renewed conception of democracy as full and direct participation within autonomous communities is, Graeber suggests, rooted in anarchist practices that reject existing structures in favour of the creation of new communities rather than confrontation with the powers of the day, and, in so doing, both produce and

¹³⁰ As mentioned above, Graeber links the political ontology of imagination not only to anarchist practices, but also to Marx and nineteenth century revolutionaries and utopian socialists, arguing that despite Marx’s, and contemporary, gulfs between the two perspectives, both rely on an ontology of imagination as the basis for understanding political transformation (Graeber 2009, 513-4).

practice a revolutionary imagination that broadens “people’s political horizons” (2013, Introduction). This, Graeber argues, is the lasting effect of the OWS events, the transformation it brings in the authority it embodies through the refusal to address state sanctioned authorities.

While critics of OWS’s horizontalist practices acknowledge that the movement enabled the empowering expression of a wide variety of voices typically silenced by their societies,¹³¹ the movement has also been dismissed as temporary, hyper-localized, and hence inconsequential and non-threatening to broader structures of authority. Srnicek and Williams offer one such line of critique through their conceptualization of the approaches of most recent major protest movements in the West, from the anti-globalization movement of the 1990s to OWS and other ‘movements of the squares’ – as “folk politics,” which they argue “has involved the fetishization of local spaces, immediate actions, transient gestures, and particularisms of all kinds” (2015, Introduction).¹³² They describe these types of struggles as akin to a collective “political common sense that has become out of joint with the actual mechanisms of power” (2015, Chapter 1). In the preference for the immediate, and everyday encounters over mass scale structures of authority, Srnicek and Williams argue that “folk politics” is rather more an ethics of daily life than a politics of broad-based action, “incapable of articulating a better world” (Introduction). This is a particularly troubling problem for Srnicek and Williams because they view “folk political thinking” as the major contemporary form of dissent from the left – and see its alternatives as the major alternative. They note that it is not political will

¹³¹ See, for instance, Khatib, Killjoy and McGuire 2012.

¹³² Srnicek and Williams’ “folk politics” phrasing has been widely criticized as pejorative and dismissive. See for instance, Gardiner 2017, and the *Disorder of Things* symposium on *Inventing the future* available online at <https://thedisorderofthings.com/tag/inventing-the-future/>.

or small numbers that have hampered the successes of movements on the left from the 1990s to the present – hundreds of thousands, and, in some places, millions, have mobilized in movements against war, austerity policies, in student protests against tuition fees and global neoliberal polities more broadly. Yet, because these movements have not had sustained or broad-based success, Srnicek and Williams consider them failures as political struggles.

While they concede that the local and particular is a “necessary component of any successful political project,” they argue that it can only be the beginning of a project that shifts from particular tactics to universal strategy, from concrete practices to abstract ideals (Chapter 1). Specifically, they point to both a reduction of complexity and a perhaps individualism within the projects of “folk politics,” writing that it:

attempts to give a human face to power; whereas what is truly terrifying is the general asubjective nature of the system... The turn towards localism, temporary moments of resistance, and intuitive practices of direct action all effectively attempt to condense the problems of global capitalism into concrete figures and moments. In this process, folk politics often reduces politics to an ethical and individual struggle (Chapter 1).

In turning inwards and towards an autonomous politics removed from sanctioned political authorities, in celebrating short-term victories like shutting down meetings of intergovernmental organizations, the struggles associated with “folk politics” do not seek mass influence. A major criticism of prefigurative politics in general and Bey’s work in particular, is that “these movements, protests and occupations in fact exist only for their own sake” (Srnicek and Williams 2015, Chapter 1). The broader insight is that prefigurative politics’ appeal or performance of freedom does not apply to those who are unable to participate. In summary, the argument is that while autonomous practices may transform their participants and create (often temporary) communities that function in accordance with horizontalist practices, they do not have this effect on broader structures

of authority, or, indeed, pose a threat to most large-scale forms of authority. Indeed, the text's epigraph is a much-cited quotation from Jodi Dean: "Goldman Sachs doesn't care if you raise chickens." That is to say that authorities largely ignore or do not take prefigurative movements as serious threats. When they do, movements are brutally suppressed (as was the case with the coordinated suppression of OWS, particularly in New York and Oakland).¹³³ Ultimately, Srnicek and Williams suggest, "valuing withdrawal or exit" – autonomy or prefigurative politics – expresses a romanticism rather than engaging in a politics of structural change (Chapter 1). It is thus to a discussion of both Srnicek and Williams' and Dean's complementary approaches to structural change as an orientation to authority that I now turn.

Authorizing strategies, authorizing concepts

The arguments developed by Dean in *The Communist Horizon* (2012a) and *Crowd and Party* (2016) offer a complementary argument to that proposed by Srnicek and Williams in *Inventing the Future* (and their 2013 #Accelerate manifesto and related texts). For both Dean and Srnicek and Williams, the issue at stake is large scale global transformation, and the positioning of practical-conceptual alternatives to capitalism, developed through readings of contemporary radical movements like OWS, which they classify broadly as "anti-capitalist movements." They argue that the radical political movements of the past thirty years have failed due to a lack of imagination, and pose alternative programs of radical politics focused on mass structural transformations through a reworking of the historically authoritative concepts and practices of both European modernity in general (progress, freedom), and Marxist-inspired theorizing

¹³³ See, for instance, Wolf 2012.

specifically (the party form, class struggle). Here, I first outline the scope of each of their arguments, before asking some questions about the ways in which practices of classification and relationships to authoritative structures and concepts are the framework upon which both Srnicek and Williams' and Dean's theorizations rely.

Srnicek and Williams view the autonomous practices called for and enacted by horizontalist movements as poor alternatives. Indeed, contra Graeber's view that horizontalist movements have revived a "radical imaginary," Srnicek and Williams argue that the contemporary condition of dissent has resulted in a situation in which the future has been "cancelled" due to a "lack of new ideas" and a generalized "paralysis of the political imaginary" on the left.¹³⁴ Because of capitalism's scope and expansiveness, they argue, specific particular projects can easily co-exist within capitalist universalism. This limitation of the political imaginary to local, temporary, and detached movements that do not actively threaten capital, they suggest, is in fact one of the most significant and yet subtle aspects of contemporary capitalist hegemonic politics. As noted above, a central aspect of Srnicek and Williams' critique of the protest movements of the past thirty years – from alter-globalization movements of the 1990s to OWS – is that these movements, in focusing on the immediacy of specific political relationships, and the particularity of direct action tactics, do not adequately take on questions of structure and form. In recentering conceptual analysis as the basis for counter-hegemonic strategy, Srnicek and Williams seek to attend to the inadequacies they diagnose, arguing that "[w]ithout the necessary abstraction of strategic thought, tactics are ultimately fleeting gestures"

¹³⁴ In this chapter, I examine only the philosophical-conceptual aspect of their argument for a populist counter-hegemony through the reclamation of modernity by the contemporary left – their theoretical reframing of the modern ideals of progress, universalism and freedom. I do not take up their specific demands and proposal for the implementation for a "post-work future."

(Chapter 1). Indeed, they argue, these tactics are self-defeating, a form of ‘Left melancholia’ and ultimately an excuse to do nothing on a large scale.

Srnicek and Williams thus assert a “counter-hegemonic” strategy as a means to match the formal nature of contemporary capitalism. Contemporary capitalism must be met in this way because it is “an aggressively expansive universal, from which efforts to segregate a space of autonomy are bound to fail” (Chapter 4). Thus, for them, a totalizing structural alternative, one that takes seriously the abstract forms upon which any hegemonic politics is built, is the only plausible alternative to contemporary global capitalism. As Michael Gardiner has put it in an assessment of Srnicek and Williams’ project, the “‘bad abstractions’ (capital, labour, commodities) can only be confronted effectively through a new, emancipatory ‘politics of abstraction’” (Gardiner 2017, 38).

The “counter-hegemonic” alternative Srnicek and Williams advocate is distinctive in its orientation to questions of authority. Their approach signals to the authority of pre-1968 leftist ideals – contra the “new social movements” of the 1980s and 1990s and the “new” “new social movements” that have emerged since 2008 – while at the same time redefining them and orienting them towards techno-utopian futures. Specifically, Srnicek and Williams locate a counter-hegemonic alternative in renewed versions of already hegemonic concepts to argue for Enlightenment ideals for a contemporary age of technological complexity. They thus advocate the reclamation, revision, and revitalization of concepts of modernity, universalism, and freedom. In order for a revitalized left to offer a plausible alternative vision of the future, Srnicek and Williams argue, it must contest the idea of modernity as necessarily connected to capitalism. They argue that modernity is “tantamount to ‘the discovery of the future’” and must rather be linked to the transformative conceptual innovations with which it has

been broadly associated: “an image of historical progress, a universalist horizon and a commitment to emancipation” (Chapter 4). It is necessary to posit *images* of progress, they argue, because in their absence, there are only the local struggles they have grouped together as “folk politics.” They dub their redefinition of modernity “hyperstitional progress,” a commitment to a future and “a kind of fiction, but one that aims to transform itself into a truth.” They thus reject the historical ideal of “one size fits all progress” which has been responsible for the justification of colonial and imperial practices (Chapter 4). Instead, they posit progress as always a matter of struggle, “following no pre-plotted trajectory or natural tendency, and with no guarantee of success” (Chapter 4).

From this emerges their redefinition of universalism – “the idea that certain values, ideas and goals may hold across all cultures” (Chapter 4) – as both a necessity, but a non-homogenous “placeholder that is impossible to fill definitively” (Chapter 4). Universalism – a united counter-hegemonic set of values and goals – is necessary to compete with the many expansive varieties of global capitalism. They acknowledge the colonial and genocidal histories with which contemporary hegemonic universals are associated but argue that universals are always open to contestation and subversion. They worry that giving up on universalism as a category leaves nothing but particulars, and thus no real possibility of global solidarity. Worse, it risks “Orientalizing other cultures” (Chapter 4). Because they argue that there is no authority – no means of adjudication – to decide “*which* global knowledges, politics, and practices support a politics of emancipation,” the universal itself emerges from “hegemonic struggle... [when] a particular (‘Europe’) comes to represent itself as the universal (‘global’)” (Chapter 4). What they thus propose is a kind of strategic universalism that is a “product of politics, not a transcendent judge standing above the fray,” and a heterogenous one, “that includes

differences rather than eliminating them” (Chapter 4). What they mean by strategic universalism is the putting of universal principles at work in political ways, for “liberating strategic purposes” by movements on the ground – here, they cite the uses of universal human rights (“problematic as it may be”) by various movements from housing to international war crimes (Chapter 4). Further, their vision of strategic universalism requires a heterogeneity to compete with the heterogeneity of capitalism’s global reach, where modernity, again is “open to co-creation” with those “outside Europe” (Chapter 4).

Their understanding of freedom is similarly non-essentialist and based on egalitarian principles of the provision of material capacities to be free – income, time, health, education and so on – rather than exclusively negative understandings of freedom. For instance, being free does not only mean being free to run for office, but also the network and funding with which to do so. Thus, they suggest that global inequality is a problem of freedom. They note that:

[u]nderstood in this way, freedom and power become intertwined. If power is the basic capacity to produce intended effects in someone or something else, then an increase in our ability to carry out our desires is simultaneously an increase in our freedom (Chapter 4).

They refer to their understanding of freedom as “synthetic” as a way of distinguishing it from articulations of freedom that appeal to naturalistic bases. “Synthetic freedom” is thus for them “a collective historical achievement rather than the result of simply leaving people be” (Chapter 4). Here, they outline a variety of objectives for the achievement of synthetic freedom which will be familiar as generally social democratic aims: a universal basic income, sufficient leisure time, and so on. They are also, however, interested in expanding human capacities for imaginative possible alternatives. They argue that abstract, conceptual learning enables the possibility for creative thinking and action – and specifically collective action, which is a significant aspect of synthetic freedom. Finally,

the note that conceptual learning must emphasize the development of technology, where they argue, after Marx and Engels, that “our level of freedom is highly dependent upon the historical conditions of scientific and technological development” (Chapter 4). Each of these aspects of their synthetic freedom, Srnicek and Williams argue, build freedom through experimentation and transformation – rather than a predefined humanism. Rather, they evoke a kind of futurist humanism based on Enlightenment ideals for a present of technological (and technotopian?) complexity. Through these redefinitions, then, Srnicek and Williams set out their programme for a counter-hegemonic project that is both the antithesis to “folk politics” and able to sufficiently counter the hegemony of global capitalism by mirroring its formal parameters.

Like Srnicek and Williams, Jodi Dean argues that a concentrated, structural force is necessary to defeat capitalism and suggests that the multiplicities and pluralisms of the movements of the past thirty years are insufficient to the task. However, unlike Srnicek and Williams, Dean sees possibilities in the contemporary movements, should they be reconceptualized and refocused to be in line with a renewed revolutionary programme. She suggests that while movements have “lost sight of the communist horizon,” contemporary movements like European anti-austerity movements and OWS may be regaining the possibility of such a vision. The “communist horizon,” for Dean, enables the emergence and coalescence of revolutionary possibilities – it is a coherent alternative to aim for, “the necessity to abolish capitalism and to create global practices and institutions of egalitarian cooperation” (2012a, 11). These practices and institutions require “tight organizational forms (party, council, working group, cell), and the sovereignty of the people over the economy through which we produce and reproduce ourselves” (2012a, 12). Through renewed theorizations and performances of authoritative

organizational concepts and practices, then, Dean posits the possibility of an emancipatory future akin to that called for by Srnicek and Williams.

To do this, Dean rethinks the possibilities of movements like OWS on the basis of the authority of Marxist-inspired forms and concepts. She suggests that the communist horizon can be glimpsed if we think contemporary protests through the lens of class struggle, and consequently through the centering of the party as the means of extending struggles into an organized form. Like Srnicek and Williams, Dean calls for a heterogeneous universalization, where, specifically, the form of ‘the people’ is both the universal and “a divided and divisive force” (2012a, 19). This, for instance, is the question of the 99% against the 1% popularized by OWS. Here, perhaps, Dean’s argument is more interesting than Srnicek and Williams.’ For her, the internal differences within the 99% are also the commonality of the people, where “ideas and affects are not infinitely transferable, accessible, communicable” (2012a, 146). Thus, for Dean, division within is common to communication within. The people here is a collective subject, and the argument is that OWS, as noted in Chapter Four, has brought about a new form of political subject. OWS as collective subject enables both a new subjective capacity, and “the elimination (or inexistence) of the supposition that we will go along with the status quo,” or a resistance and rejection of an absent future (Dean 2012a, 213). For Dean, then, OWS enables the possibility of thinking a Hegelian-Marxist subject of history anew. In so doing, the subject both rejects the subjectivation of the state, and creates its own future possibilities. Indeed, this renewed collective subject is a complete subject that, to recall Lukács’ formulation, which Dean cites, through which “[t]he movement [becomes] ‘a world of activity for every one of its members’ [*History and Class Consciousness*]” (Dean 2012a, 217). However, unlike horizontalist thinkers

like Graeber, Bey, or Day, Dean argues that not only is a movement like OWS indicative of a class struggle but that self-organization in crowds (like that of the OWS protests) does not ensure horizontality, but in fact often produces hierarchy (Dean 2016, “Introduction”).

In order for the movement to retain its potency and endure towards the communist horizon, to retain its *politics*, and to harness productively its inevitable hierarchy, Dean thus argues that the protests’ enduring power should coalesce in the organizational form of the party. This is especially the case in the context of contemporary protests where Dean advocates that non-specific revolt should be read as class struggle. This is because, for the newest generation of those who have become proletarianized through capitalism in its late modern “communicative” form, their protest can take the contours of a personalized libertarianism. These protestors’ “identities are so fluid that they can be channeled in different directions that they simultaneously always exceed. They have a hard time uniting as a class even as their actions are the expressions of a class” (Dean 2016, “Introduction”, epub). So, Dean writes, the protestors may not know their own politics. Indeed, citing Zizek, she writes that “politics without the organizational form of the Party is politics without politics” (Zizek 2002, 297, quoted in Dean 2012a, 9). It is, rather, an ethics. This is a chief criticism of both horizontalist politics and liberal politics for Dean (and Srnicek and Williams), where, in envisioning politics without “representation, exclusion, dogmatism, and utopianism,” Dean argues that both liberalism and horizontalism efface politics altogether (Dean 2012b). The party form includes aspects of each of these, and, in so doing, retains both a politics and the future directedness of the cohesive alternative of the communist horizon. Further, the party is the particularly appropriate form for this process of organizing – and of authorizing the

energy of the protests – because it enables multiple levels and spaces of association. In short, Dean argues, the party form dwells exclusively in neither the particularisms of the local nor the abstractions of the global (2016, “Introduction”). OWS is, for Dean, the basis for the argument for the Party structure as ordering a communist horizon, and “the collective desire for collectivity” where the party provides a way to harness the movement’s “assertion of division, its new mode of representation, and its affirmation of collective power” (Dean 2012a, 212). It also *authorizes*, through the authority of the party form itself. Existing at various scales, the Party form takes on the question of capitalism’s abstract expansiveness, and enables the countering of abstraction with abstraction. For Dean, this abstraction, at the global level, furthers the aim of a future directed politics. Thus, a renewed form of communists must think seriously about “the party form unfettered by the false concreteness of specific parties in the contingency of their histories” (2016, “Introduction,” epub).

Both Srnicek and Williams and Dean take questions of structure and abstraction seriously as considerations for the authority of political alternatives. They present fairly thorough, cohesive programs that take into account key conceptual orientations in the aim to counter universalist abstractions with universalist abstractions. Their thought raises several sets of questions, however, around authority and classification. As I have noted above, both Srnicek and Williams’ and Dean’s programmes for future political alternatives rely on revitalizing and redeploying historically authoritative concepts – ones emerging from Enlightenment thought (Srnicek and Williams) and ones grounded in 19th and early 20th century Marxist/Hegelian formulations (Dean). There are two sets of questions here: first, given the ways in which these concepts are redeployed as authoritative (and redeployed as a way of grounding Srnicek and Williams’ and Dean’s

approaches in authoritative conceptual frameworks), do they retain their authority given Srnicek and Williams' and Dean's reconceptualizations and decontextualizations? For instance, once freedom is thought of as akin to equality, does it retain its historical, revolutionary authority *as* freedom (distinct from equality)? Srnicek and Williams argue that their renewed conception of freedom must also be viewed as a matter of expanding our current capacities of understanding what is possible – that is to say, our capacities of thinking conceptual and linguistic possibilities. They continue to note that that “language is effectively cognitive scaffolding that enables us to leverage symbolic thought to expand our horizons” (Chapter 4). This conceptual scaffolding is, then, authoritative. It holds together the relationship between the conceptual framework they spell out and the way it is put to work. At the same time, our conceptual inheritances put serious limits on the possible architectures of this scaffolding, even though Srnicek and Williams argue that “as we acquire technical knowledge of our built environment and scientific knowledge of the natural world, and come to understand the fluid tendencies of the social world, we gain greater powers to act” (Chapter 4, epub). Given the question of limits, which Srnicek and Williams do not address, it is not clear then whether their reclamation of Enlightenment concepts is entirely strategic or sincere. As their own understanding of freedom is, indeed, limited by contemporary linguistic and conceptual scaffolding, thinking the expansion of capacities of the possible becomes a much more complex project.

A second set of questions must be posed around both Srnicek and Williams' and Dean's decontextualization of the concepts they reclaim. While they tread carefully and acknowledge the violent, colonial histories with which Enlightenment and Marxist concepts have been associated, rejecting Eurocentrism, it is my sense that they leave

these problematics aside too quickly. Conceptual innovations cannot be divorced from their contexts and the effects of their contexts. Srnicek and Williams' rejection of the co-constitution of modernity and capitalism in the form of the West's claims of universalism is another case where their decontextualization of the concepts they reclaim must be put into question. They argue that the "conflation of modernity with the institutions of capitalism" is "mistaken" and does not take into account the many other possible forms modernity can take. While they cite Walter Mignolo (2011) in noting that European modernity is historically inseparable from its colonial and capitalist foundations, they do not take up the substance of his account of contemporary practices of economic, political cultural, and epistemic dewesternization, decoloniality and rewesternization. For Mignolo, dewesternization refers to efforts to delink political and cultural self-determination on the part of countries outside the West (for instance, the BRICs countries), but maintain a course of economic development, in line with some version of capitalism, but not in accordance with the mandates of Western economic institutions and 20th century dependencies therein (Mignolo 2012). Decoloniality, on the other hand, "works toward delinking from economic coloniality (e.g., a capitalist economy within which there can be no peace, equality or democracy)" (2012, epub). This kind of project, Mignolo argues, requires building decolonial knowledge against "the hegemony of Western knowledge that justifies the hegemony of capitalism and the State...and that establishes development as a condition of freedom" (2012, epub). Epistemic decolonization is thus crucial to Mignolo's understanding of decoloniality. In opposition to both dewesternization and decoloniality, Mignolo outlines projects of rewesternization, which seek to maintain the primacy of "modernity" as the best (if not only) option for most people in the world. Returning to Srnicek and Williams, in light of Mignolo's

characterization of the functioning of the concepts of Western modernity contra those outside the West, their argument around strategic and competing universalisms seems more difficult to justify. Srnicek and Williams are ambiguous on the political struggles through which universals emerge as counter-hegemonic. Any alternative political vision that is to be taken seriously must be counter-hegemonic, Srnicek and Williams argue: “[it] must inevitably face up to the problem of universalism – the idea that certain values, ideas and goals may hold across all cultures” (Chapter 4).¹³⁵ While they underscore that these political struggles for hegemony must “recognize the agency of those outside Europe” (Chapter 4), this argument does not offer a reading on how these struggles might take place. It is not clear whether the counterhegemonic strategy Srnicek and Williams propose is particularly incompatible with the current particular universal (Europe). Significantly, this articulation of universality leaves open key problems of authority and authorization, while maintaining the authority of universalism as a political category – and particularly of the authority of the current form of hegemonic universalism. However, again the question of the details of contestation or political struggle are reiterated here: How are the political importance, value and significance of the particulars that become universals adjudicated and by whom?

It is worth considering whether Srnicek and Williams’ (and, by extension, Dean’s) calls for the reclamation of the ideals of Enlightenment and Marxist projects might fall into the category of projects Mignolo calls rewesternization. Srnicek and Williams note that many anti-capitalist struggles rely on the ideals of modernity, and, at

¹³⁵ While this is certainly the case, Nandy’s insights are helpfully phrased here: “There are concepts akin to ‘liberation’ in some of the major civilizations of the world – the Sanskritic concepts of *moksha* and *mukti* are obvious examples – but they neither enjoy the same political clout nor the intellectual Stature to move the social and political activists” (1989, 267).

the same time, as discussed above, are careful to acknowledge the cultivation of analogous concepts to freedom, universalism and equality that exist independently from those disseminated by the West and to experience many more types and trajectories of modernity than the hegemonic form modernity and modernization have taken in the West. It is very difficult to argue that it is possible think entirely outside the influence of hegemonic Western concepts. As Dipesh Chakrabarty has famously argued, “European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations” (2000, 16).¹³⁶ However, despite Srnicek and Williams’ acknowledgement of both the violent histories of the concepts they seek to reclaim and the existence of ways of thinking beyond the West, their calls for new forms of strategic universalisms and debates with folk politics are largely located in Western traditions and Western debates. They point out that it is ideals like freedom, democracy and secularism that are both the foundations of capitalist modernity and its dissenting responses, but do not explain that these dissenting responses are part of a series of Western modernity’s longstanding internalized critiques – including Romanticism, Marxism and utopianism, or instance – and the only forms of dissent audible as such, as discussed in previous chapters (Nandy 1989). Thus, Srnicek and Williams’ redefinition of modernity, freedom and universalism – however open towards an unknown future – retains what Nandy calls the “prototypical pathology of the

¹³⁶ In considering the specificity of this indispensability and inadequacy, some consideration of the theories of pluriversality may be necessary. By pluriversality, I mean the existence of distinct ontological and epistemological ways of being and understanding worlds (see for instance, Blaney and Tickner 2017). In the context of a pluriverse, modernity is not the only epistemic option. Those who are “more than modern,” with roots in multiple ways of being and knowing, can move between worlds. Those who cannot move between worlds, however, assume that other worlds do not exist. Thank you to Ajay Prasaram for this insight, which he brought up during the “Sciences from below; subaltern studies; standpoint theory; border thinking; decolonial science? What’s the difference? Feminist, decolonizing and other epistemologies for research” roundtable at BISA 2017, Brighton, UK.

Enlightenment vision of the human future” (269). In centering their proposal on the reclamation of modern ideals, then, Srnicek and Williams retain both the authority of these ideals and their relation to modernity’s forms of internalized dissent.

Dean’s arguments are similarly located within debates of modernity’s internalized forms of dissent, despite her careful modulations of her position within such debates. For instance, Dean aims to move beyond the overdetermined binaries of revolutionary theory (revolution vs. reform; mass or vanguard party and so on) (Dean 2016, “Introduction”) by working to some degree through the registers of Lacanian psychoanalysis: lack, desire, division. She attempts to bring together some of the points of contentions between some Marxist-communist and horizontalist forms of dissent, advising that:

“[r]eaders inspired by radical democratic, anarchist, and post-Marxist theories might balk at a return to the party. They shouldn’t. The party is a basic form of political struggle. If innovation is necessary for finding our way out of the current political impasse, then the party, too, can be a site for experimentation and change” (Dean 2016, “Introduction”).

It is worth noting here that Graeber, too, attempts to bridge the conceptual distance between Marxist, utopian socialist, and anarchist theories of dissent through the conceptualization of the radical imagination (2009, 513-514). While these moves might be viewed as means to consolidate the main authoritative forms of dissent as themselves authoritative, the question for the last section of this text remains that of both the authority of these forms and the reiterated relationship between them.

Authority of classification

The theorizations of protests are also simultaneously classifications of protest – the commentaries on these events have struggled with reproducing explanations that reflect well-worn formulations of what both protest and politics may be. Classification offers a way of understanding what is not immediately intelligible or recognizable. In this

way, the event can be understood as a particular kind of known or knowable thing, a known object that demands a specific response, or, in the case of the protests, a programme. The process through this which the event or the movement is classified relies on a prior set of linguistic and conceptual classifications. It can be argued that the language of classification is itself authoritative. Hobbes remains a key thinker for whom and from whom this insight is clear to us.

In many ways, the authority of linguistic classification is the fundamental form of political authority for Hobbes. Indeed, in the *Leviathan*, the origins and authority of the state must first be grounded in a series of precise definitions. That is to say, he intends to discuss the classification of concepts before the relation between these concepts.¹³⁷ The opening chapters of the *Leviathan* set out the linguistic ordering, both naming the order and setting out the authority to do so. It is in these first chapters that the reader learns how the organization of the state permeates and mirrors that of a linguistic order. Hobbes is careful to include as many variables as necessary for precise communication – *speech, names, markes, signs, counsel, command, discourse, proposition, science* – that is, orderliness in language that is to precede orderliness in social and political life (Grundy 2008, 494). More than this, linguistic precision is a means of grounding political authority through control over definition and interpretation. Grundy explains that:

Hobbes's innovation is to unearth the ways in which even that everyday conception of order is essentially political—to show that our experience of order, whether linguistic, cognitive, or social, is shaped by both visible and invisible principles of constraint, coercion, fear, and violence. In linking meaning to the ordering of time, our concept of language depends on a set of overlapping dichotomies: outside–inside, particular–

¹³⁷ Ian Hacking links this linguistic ‘first move’ in Hobbes’ thought to a broader concern in Hobbes’ time. Hacking writes that there is something in 17th century thought around communication that suggests a need to ‘purify’ communication, because “public language, unlike mental discourse, is so prone to abuse. If only we could manage to get down to ideas about with we are thinking – or simply think in ideas – then, they say, we should be less likely to fall in error” (1975, 16).

universal, word–idea, body–intellect, empirical–transcendental, difference–sameness, real–ideal. The second term in each pair reflects the aspect of meaning believed to stand outside of historical time; the first term reflects the aspect of meaning that occurs within it (490).

As we know, for Hobbes, the problem is harnessing political change through multiple forms of authority, grounded on conceptual authority. But Hobbes is a bellwether for modern understandings of order. While, as has been discussed in earlier chapters, the categories listed above have been complicated by the last nearly 400 years of thought, the authority of classification as an epistemological practice continues to permeate every aspect of social and political life, including, as I have argued, our aims to understand processes of change, or global transformation, through dissent. For the most part, the interpretation of dissent itself takes specific, familiar, authoritative, modern forms – those associated with Enlightenment ideals, Romantic detachments or Marxist hopes. While thinkers like Srnicek and Williams, Dean, and Graeber and Day “may still find refuge in elaborate variations on well-worn themes,” those interested in enunciating plausible political alternatives through practices of dissent must “struggle just as much with the limited horizons of dominant ideologies and visions as they are with more concrete problems” (Walker 1988, 76). Yet, it is important to emphasize that what I am suggesting here is that it is not only form, but rather the *relation* between forms of dissent, that is standardized and standardized as a form of self-authorizing and as orientation to structures of authority.

The commentaries discussed here explain protests through reference to broad *ethos*, drawing on leftist hopes, themes of autonomy, Enlightenment ideals. As I have said, these positions, despite their aspirations to novel political relations, are themselves the reproduction of a relationship between political positions that is standard to modern thought – that between Enlightenment rationality and its attendant political ideals and

Romantic detachments from these rationalities. Writing in relation to late 20th century social movements, Roland Bleiker has affirmed that “[t]he dominant frame of contemporary consciousness today, including manifestations of popular dissent, ensued to a considerable extent from the tension between Romanticism and the Enlightenment” (2000, 107). In the context of dissent, Romanticism offers autonomy and unmanageability, a rejection of Enlightenment claims to rationality and order, and particularly political order as authoritative. While Bleiker traces this relationship to the internal practices of classification within 1960s and 1970s horizontalist thought,¹³⁸ my suggestion is that this relationship persists in the positioning of competing interpretations of the 2009-2013 protests discussed here and the political alternatives they pose.

¹³⁸ See footnote 17 above.

Conclusion

A decade after the first mass post-2008 financial crisis protests began in the streets and squares of hundreds of European and North American cities, reviewing the contemporaneous analyses of these events evokes a kind of longing for the enthusiasm, hope and novel sense of promise of participating in and witnessing these events. When desires for a different and better political future are deeper and somehow more urgent, but hopes and possibilities further away, how and, significantly, to *what*, do we direct our desires? Given the events of the previous fifteen years, from anti-Iraq war mobilizations, to the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) protests, to the Black Lives Matter movement, and their relative lack of substantive outcomes in the form of formal political change, in a *New Yorker* review essay (2017), Nathan Heller asks, is there any longer a “point” to protesting or should ‘we’, ever hopeful activists, leftists, and sympathetic commentators approach questions of dissent differently? In their recently published follow-up to *Empire* and *Multitude, Assembly* (2017), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri ask, “[w]hy have the movements, which address the needs and desires of so many, not been able to achieve lasting change and create a new, more democratic and just society?” (epub, no page).

This dissertation has argued that the questions posed by Heller, Hardt and Negri and other commentators on the protest events of the past decade (and beyond) must take into account the *epistemological* categories through which commentaries on protests, in both popular and scholarly realms, have been articulated. To this end, I have articulated an epistemology of dissent as a way of mapping categories of understanding as an attempt at understanding the limits of dissent that recent protest events have

encountered.¹³⁹ I have focused on the articulation of hopes for transformation through three specific categories of understanding: novelty, subjectivity, and authority. These categories frame both then-current commentaries on the 2009-2013 protests and more recent reflections on these same events. The category of novelty is framed through the description of the 2009-2013 protests as exemplifying novel forms of protest, and through them, novel understandings of the political.¹⁴⁰ These descriptions of novelty are often articulated around the ways in which the protests signaled the possibility of the reconfiguration of traditional forms of authority, whether through protestors' horizontalist modes of engaging with one another, or through the possibility of the disturbance, if not (yet) outright overturning, of the capitalist, or authoritarian (or both), status quo.¹⁴¹ Most significantly, perhaps, commentators identified in the protests a shift in the practice and articulation of new forms of subjectivity, whether renewed forms of the plural political subject, or deepened articulations of the ideals of the modern Enlightenment subject.¹⁴²

My argument is that while protests and mass practices of dissent more broadly tend to be symptoms of political crises, they are also often indicative of crises of understanding, of attempts to understand our present situation and to trace a path for our

¹³⁹ An epistemology of dissent, as I am employing the term here, must be distinguished from epistemological dissent, which, in my view, includes more established and longstanding challenges to the epistemological inheritances of the European Enlightenment with which this article is concerned. These challenges include those from within Enlightenment traditions, such as those of the post-structuralist texts of the 1960s and 1970s (those associated with Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Irigaray, Cixous, among others) but also practices of epistemological dissent that are ontologically distinct, and sometimes, opposed to European Enlightenment traditions. For an explication of the relationship between what I have called an epistemology of dissent and epistemological dissent, focused on the question of subjectivity, see Hamati-Ataya 2013. For an explication of the significance of recent Indigenous practices of epistemological dissent, see Aguirre 2018.

¹⁴⁰ See, for instance, Berardi 2011, Castells 2012 and 2015, Mason 2013, Tejerina et al 2013, Zizek 2011, 2013, 2014.

¹⁴¹ I identify these as commentaries oriented towards questions of authority. For instance, see Dean 2016, 2012a, 2012b, Deseris and Dean 2012, Evans and Moses 2011, Roos 2013, Srnicek and Williams 2015.

¹⁴² See, for instance, Andersen 2011, Dean 2012a, Castells 2012 and 2015, Krastev 2015, Mason 2013, Perugorría and Tejerina 2013, Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013, Zevnik 2014.

political futures.¹⁴³ In so doing, they necessarily compare and contrast their understanding of the present to previous flash points of dissent and seek to articulate new, or revised, categories through which to think dissent. Upon closer inspection, however, these new or revised categories – as desires for a particular kind of political future – often tend to correspond to historically significant alternative futures, ideals or archetypical outcomes, broad families of thought that have been revised and re-articulated in many ways over the past hundred, or three hundred, years. These are the archetypical ideals associated with the Enlightenment subject, and with communist and autonomist forms of community. These ideals are alluring because they (indeed, we) have long been implicated in a deeper politics of classification. These are, respectively, the analysis of how contemporary concepts must be understood through their historical evolution and uses (Hacking 2002, 9), but also how phenomena exhibit “looping effects,” or take on the descriptions, or classifications, attributed to them.¹⁴⁴ As Bartelson puts it with regard to war, “protest is thus what we make of it through our creative use of its concept” (2017, 23).

My wager here has been that recourse to the categories of the epistemology of dissent described above as our forms of diagnoses of the present, and the attendant prescriptions for the future they forward, is a trap. Put simply, these classifications trap our future.¹⁴⁵ That said, I have not intended this to be a conservative or cynical argument; classifications are crucial ways of articulating snapshots of theoretical imaginaries, ways we describe our current conditions and possibilities for the future. To that end,

¹⁴³ Hannah Arendt’s reflections on Kant explicate this problem (1994[1944]).

¹⁴⁴ See Hacking 1995 and 2002 and also, on Hacking’s looping effects, Bartelson 2017.

¹⁴⁵ Thank you to Danielle Taschereau Mamers for this formulation.

overlooking the *politics* of classification is a major problem for any progressive emancipatory project, because classification is a key aspect of modern emancipatory thought and action. It thus continues to be instructive to examine the 2009-2013 protests as a site for an assessment of our ways of thinking through classification. A brief reflection on more recent (2016-2018) commentaries on the earlier events and the lessons learned from them offers a site for considering how renewed articulations of possibilities of thinking dissent continue to be framed through the same sets of categories. In response to the question cited above, Hardt and Negri advocate moving beyond protest towards “lasting forms of social transformation” (xiii). Such a transformation involves a reversal of structures of leadership, where sustained organization is guided by the multitude and requires a reclamation of the terms of capitalist liberal democracy, including “democracy,” “freedom,” and, curiously, in their theory for the overturning of capitalist modes of production “entrepreneurship.”¹⁴⁶ In her *Crowds and Party*, Jodi Dean also seeks to recuperate key concepts in the understanding of practices of dissent, chief among them, the concept of the communist party and the plural subjectivity of the crowd. In so doing, she is attuned to the allure of particular types of classifications, writing that it is crucial to resist “the urge to classify crowds in terms of a pre-given political content.” Instead, she urges considerations of dynamics of crowds as “the influence... of others” (2015, Introduction, epub). Yet, the subsequent argument makes a case for a return to turn of the 20th century communist concepts and practices. Micah White, a former *Adbusters* magazine staffer and OWS organizer and participant, argues in his *post-mortem* of the events that the protests offered then, and now, in the opportunity for

¹⁴⁶ In a recent interview, Michael Hardt outlined the need for a recuperation of “terms important for building political vocabularies of liberation, but which have become corrupted.” See Fitch 2018.

reflection, the possibility “to discover the new form of protest that is effective in the present historical moment” (White 2016, Preface, epub). What each of these commentaries seeks to articulate, I suggest, is both a future directed concern and a reproduction of familiar forms – whether through the recuperation of dominant concepts or through the repeated proclamation of novelty.

At a most basic level, what this project traces is a persistence of claims to novelty in explaining the practices of dissent and a relentless (if sometimes melancholy) optimism in framing future possibilities. In view of this, however, I caution the significance of, perhaps, centering a kind of epistemological pessimism. That is to say, a pessimism in relation to the limits of our thinking, which centers the politics of classification in considerations of the future of dissent. This pessimism is a form of attunement to the classificatory trap we find ourselves in vis-à-vis questions of dissent, but also vis-à-vis the categories that practices and understandings of dissent seek to rework – what I have classified as categories of novelty, subjectivity, and authority, and what may be more commonly identified as key epistemological categories of European modernity.

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