

Throughout the history of Western metaphysics, the figure of the beast has been excluded from the realms of the thinkable and the doable, even as it constituted these realms. This essay aims to outline the trajectory of such exclusion and to invest the figure of the beast with renewed significance for political theory and practice.

Taming the Beast: The Other Tradition in Political Theory

MICHAEL MARDER

The institution of the political relies on the figure of the beast and, at one and the same time, paradoxically represses and excludes this figure. In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Giorgio Agamben theorizes various legal and political “mechanisms of exclusion,” ban, and abandonment that facilitate this exclusion. The sacred life, understood as bare life, creates a space of exception from the human and divine laws, allowing for the killing, but not the sacrifice, of *homo sacer* (Agamben 81). The intersection of the two exclusions opens what Agamben considers as “the first properly political space in the West distinct from both the religious and the profane sphere” (84). In other words, Agamben posits *homo sacer*, rather than *homo sapiens*, at the origin of the political, but this origin is still appropriated by the species *homo* and by a presumably foundational (law-making) act of exclusion of the natural.

Locating bare life at the origin of the political, Agamben enters into a tacit polemic with Benjamin, who contends that “man cannot, at any price, be said to coincide with the mere life in him [. . .]. However sacred man is [. . .] there is no sacredness in his condition, in his bodily life vulnerable to injury by his fellow men” (299). While

Agamben claims that the exact opposite is true, it is not clear why the bare life of animals or plants—*zoë*, which is common to all of them (Agamben 1)—cannot potentially be utilized by the originary act of political and legal exclusion. For example, in his treatment of Heideggerian metaphysics, Derrida holds the view that animality inhabits the “excluded middle,” the ambiguous niche between the “world-forming” man and the inanimate thing “without world” (*Spirit* 48). “The animal has the world in the mode of not-having” (50)—this dictum constitutes the problem of animality posed on the slippery grounds between the thing and the human. The privation and lack that define the animality of the animal imply that to turn into an animal is to be robbed of the world and of the access to being.

What Derrida’s reading illustrates is a pre-legal, pre-originary, ontological exclusion of the animal *from ontology*. Excluded from everywhere and from everything, the animal is abandoned, and yet it continues to exist, despite its double exclusion from the world of pure matter (the thing) and that of pure spirit (the human). This aporetic condition mirrors the predicament of *homo sacer*, but it also reminds us that the human and divine laws anchored in the sufficiency and excess of having could not have come into effect without the prior deprivation and dispossession of the animal. In this sense, the Agambenian “origin” of the political is preceded and displaced by the immemorial and often unquestioned abandonment of the animal.

In addition to postulating the origin of the political as a double exclusion of *homo sacer*, Agamben also identifies the precise mechanism of exclusion as a unique type of legality. The form of law that describes the ban is articulated in the Kantian terms of “*being in force without significance*” (51). “Without significance” connotes—negatively—a rejection of all mediation, signification, and language, and—positively—a predication of the law on the immediacy and spontaneity reminiscent of the activity of Nietzsche’s blond beasts. The ban is, thus, determined on the basis of a mute actuality. A similar bestialization of law will be also employed by Georges Sorel as a strategy for the syndicalist movement to condemn and refuse the bourgeois parliamentary mediations.

But what is the meaning of “being in force,” or enforcement, considered against the backdrop of the bastardized-bestialized legality? For Derrida, enforcement is the ineluctable component not only of the institution of law, but also of the speech act in general. The making of any law “would consist of a *coup de force*, of a performative and therefore interpretative violence that is neither just nor unjust” (“Force” 13). Harking back to his treatment of Austin, Derrida suggests that any act of locution or meaning-making is inseparable from the illocutionary force of the statement. And yet, the law, which is “in force without significance,” is not really enforceable, because the beastly

immediacy inherent in it forecloses the possibility of interpretive violence. Thus, the divorce of performativity from interpretation signifies the unsustainability of enforcement and the end of law *qua* law.

The mechanism of exclusion based on the bestialization of law is oblique, precisely because law and legal-political theory alike are forced to articulate the inarticulable. In Derrida's view, the institution of law cannot (and should not) rely on a meta-language, from which the performative or interpretative language would arise ("Force" 13). That is to say: the "foundations of authority" obscured behind the mists of legends and mysticism resist all theoretical attempts to unearth the pre-linguistic origin of language, which forms the outer rim and the limit of the system of representation. As a "being in force without significance," law enters a "legitimation crisis" (Agamben 51), because "without significance," it is no longer legible, no longer inscribed as a signifier, but instead reverts into a pure (transcendental?) signified. To transcribe this into the terms appropriate for the synthesis of Agamben's "exclusive inclusion" and Heidegger's "dispossession" of the animal is to argue that beyond the ontological grasp of the animal, thought enters the non-signifying territory of the beast incommensurate with the *scales* of ontology.

Thanks to the specification of the exclusionary mechanisms, the contours of the distinction between the animal and the beast become more tangible. The animal, in the etymological sense of the word, is born of the Latin *anima*—spirit, or, literally, the breath of life, which is also the grammatical root of *animation*. The animal is the animated one, the one who moves, or is moved. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari describe the process of "becoming-animal" as the dissemination of the animal "speeds and affects on the plane of consistency" (258). But the movement and, in particular, the speed of the animal is increasingly assimilated to the prerogatives of politico-ontological controls, operating through its dispossession and the ban. The animal's speed is diminished, if not reduced to zero-intensity, while the animal without animation loses all semblance of animality. In the words of Michel Foucault: "For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question" (*History* 143).

The modern political animal, whose "existence as a living being" is "in question," faces two alternatives. First, it can fatalistically and nihilistically resign to the sovereignty of the ban, the excessive and all-pervasive domestication, acculturation, and surveillance. Such an alternative implies the deadening indifference of the *Muselmann* who has "neither the will to live, nor the will to die" (Agamben 138). A tamed animal,

losing the last accoutrements of its animality, will passively embrace the closure of the “access to the entity as such” and experience the depressed *Benommenheit*—benumbedness, or dazedness (Derrida, *Spirit* 54). *Benommenheit* is an external sign of the drastic deceleration of the animal, of the loss of its life and animation (of life as animation).

It is conceivable that the first alternative conceals a paradoxical strategy of passive resistance. But the second, diametrically opposed alternative consists of a metamorphosis of the semi-extinct animal into the beast, when the abandoned creature slips away from the regime of the signifier, biosemiosis, and the economy of language. The escape is facilitated by the mechanism of the ban that not only exiles the abandoned one from political ontology and signification, but also culminates in the (negative) freedom *from* being and the (positive) freedom *to* assume high degrees and extreme intensity of animation driving the chaotic dynamism of the beast. The sovereign beast is finally produced when, under the pressure of the ban, the animality and the animation of the animal are radicalized to such an extent that they infinitely overflow the theories and the categories that attempt to capture them.

One of the effects of the radicalization of animality is that the difference between the sovereign and the beast becomes ephemeral, or virtually non-existent. As Mary Midgley points out, Western philosophy has constructed the notion of the “beast within” in order to account for the problem of evil and have used this notion “as a scapegoat for human wickedness” (40). According to the logic of the beast within, before declaring the war on the external beasts, one must engage in an extensive internal struggle against oneself, submit to the severest repression that leads through self-denial to self-government, and, in Nietzsche’s words, “say *no* to oneself.”

Kantian autonomous self-legislating individual reaches the apogee of self-government by reigning in the beast within. Yet, the internal struggle never ceases, for—as long as one’s sexuality is retained—there is always a possibility of relapse and “degeneration”: “Sexuality exposes man to the danger of equality with the beasts” (Kant 164). And yet, with Nietzsche’s reading of Kant, the internal consistency of the logic of the Beast Within is disrupted. Taking up the Kantian concept of sovereignty in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche brings it to its logical conclusion that deconstructs this concept. Nietzsche’s first theoretical gesture—which is also a trap—is to reassert the Kantian premise that the “sovereignty of the will” bestows upon man the ability to promise, and, with it, the qualities of calculability and predictability. But Nietzsche supersedes Kant, stating that the truly sovereign individual is, in fact, individual or undividable because he resembles only himself and is “free again from the morality of custom, autonomous and supermoral” (36). This unexpected theoretical

finale puts the “sovereign individual” on par with the beast-of-prey exempt from the morality of custom. The sovereign and the beast merge into one and the same super-moral and super-legal being that laughs in the face of the self-control and sanctioned repression (of empirical subjectivity, of the beast within) characteristic of the Kantian sovereign individual.

Leaving the Nietzschean ingenuous solution on one side for a moment, let us examine the assertion that if one is unable to govern oneself, one will surely not be capable of governing others. For Kant, if one is to learn to govern oneself, one must learn to listen to the noumenal subjectivity that dictates the law to itself by itself. Conversely, the sovereign government of others depends upon the functions of law-making and law-giving, requiring the withdrawal of the sovereign into the space of exception and excess, signifying “the absolute and inhuman character of sovereignty” (Agamben 101). In other words, in order to effectuate my transformation into a sovereign for others, I must go to great lengths to distance myself from law, rather than submit to its repressive apparatuses.

The inconsistency of “self-government” with the political notion of sovereignty furnishes the main argumentative thread for René Girard’s *Violence and the Sacred*. Recounting the ritual of the royal incest, Girard depicts the intensity of the king’s desublimation—in Nietzsche’s terms, yes-saying to oneself—achieved through numerous transgressions and the blind self-gratification preceding the coronation. Among the key transgressions are (a) acts of incest, “either real, or symbolic,” (b) eating “certain forbidden foods,” and (c) committing “certain acts of violence,” such as being “bathed in blood” (104). Interestingly enough, the three ingredients of the transgressive enthronement mirror what Plato, in the beginning of Book IX of *The Republic*, sees as the beastly outcomes of the slumber of reason, namely, “sex with a mother,” “foul murder,” and dietary indiscretion (571c-d). The astonishing proximity of these practices of the tyrannical soul to Girard’s account of coronation suggests, once again, that the sovereign’s symbolic withdrawal to the murky territory outside of law must be visually de-monstrated to the public in the process of the future king’s bestialization. Girard thus concludes: “The sacred king is also a monster. He is simultaneously god, man, and savage beast” (252).

Machiavelli offers another recipe for blurring the distinction between the sovereign and the beast. In the chapter of *The Prince* ironically entitled “How princes should honour their word,” Machiavelli declares that good and competent princes “must understand [. . .] that there are two ways of fighting: by law or by force. The first way is natural to men, and the second to beasts” (56). For those, like Derrida, who consider enforcement—and therefore force and some measure of bestiality—to be the irreducible part

of the institution, interpretation, and application of law, this advice would seem to be quite naïve. Machiavelli knits together the two ways of fighting into the arsenal of a good prince trained to utilize law and force in various contexts and circumstances, but the “humanity” of law is not sustained for long. Already in the following paragraph, he abandons the metaphor of the half-human/half-beastly centaur and moves toward a beastly model of sovereignty conjoining the sly fox and strong lion. The legal space formerly allotted to the human within the prince is now inhabited by another animal, resulting in the sovereign’s complete and irrevocable bestialization.

Even the seemingly humanized rendition of the sovereign in Carl Schmitt’s political writings slips back into bestiality. For Schmitt, the sovereign is the one who makes a decision “about the critical situation” in the “state of exception” (38). A decision is a cut, or an incision in the fabric of indeterminacy. But for Derrida, and earlier for Kierkegaard, decisions are the “instants of madness” haunted by the ghost of the undecidable (“Force” 24). This madness is the other of reason within reason, the other demanding praxis *now*, at this moment, urgently, and precipitously. It is no longer politics, but ethics. The sovereign, who *must decide* (if he is to remain a sovereign at all in the spirit of the Schmittian term), will act “in the night of non-knowledge and non-rule” (26). What the madness and the immediacy of this act recall is the form of law “in force without significance” issuing from the beastly divorce of performativity from interpretation. Instead of passively contemplating the consequences and weighing the dangers, the beastly sovereign violently acts, animates, and creates.

Very few texts, with the exception of Girard and Midgley, try to explicate the forces that drive the sovereign’s bestialization. By way of a rather circular explanation, Midgley argues that subsequent to the interiorization of the fictitious beast within, this construct was projected onto the outside animal world: “If the Beast Within was capable of every iniquity, people reasoned, then beasts without probably were too” (40). Anchoring his version of bestialization in mimetic desire, which presumably moves in the direction opposite to Midgley’s projection, Girard produces a complex theory of the “monstrous double.” We can detect at least three levels or stages of bestialization in Girard’s theory. First, he concurs with Foucault that monsters fall outside of the system of classification because “no stable difference really serves to separate them” (160). Already at this stage, the monster can double up as a sovereign, if the defiance of classification is perceived as the insignia of supremacy and omnipotence. Second, there is a frantic interchange between the animal, the human, and the divine, resulting in the “beasts [. . .] mistaken for men or gods” and “gods and men mistaken for beasts” (162). Due to the interchange of the indeterminate differentiations, the sacred king manages to dynamically consolidate difference in his identity, to bring

together different realms of the cosmos, and finally to ground sovereignty in cosmology. Third, the monster is doubled as a “surrogate victim,” when it encounters the other and is “caught up in a constant interchange of differences” with the other under the veil of unrecognized reciprocity (164). Like the beast within, the external other is perceived as an enemy, who is not only forgotten and repressed, but also physically and ceremonially sacrificed. The surrogate victim serves as the matter, as the substratum on which the sovereignty of the sovereign is emblazoned.

The last stage of Girard’s sovereign-formation is reinscribed in Agamben’s *Homo Sacer*, where the sovereign and the beast double up in the mythical figure of the were-wolf. The zone of indistinction between the animal and the human is continually recreated in the bare life of the were-wolf—the common root of sovereignty and of *homo sacer* (107). Paradoxically, with the surrogate victim that doubles up the king, and with *homo sacer* derived from the same source as the sovereign, contemporary political theory returns, in a roundabout way, to the notion of sovereignty as self-government. In both cases, the sovereign beast disciplines *itself*, either sacrificing its double, or killing *homo sacer*. The sovereign has no other choice but to emblazon sovereignty on its own body, because (1) sovereignty is everywhere; it encompasses the realms of gods, men, and beasts, and (2) everyone is a potential “*homo sacer* for everyone else” (106), as well as a potential sovereign for every other *homo sacer*. Here, one witnesses the rise of what I call “hyper-sovereignty”—the diffusion of beastly sovereignty that, having monopolized all difference and having conquered everything that exists (and may potentially exist), consumes itself as other. In the political conditions created by hyper-sovereignty, the decision lies with everyone and with no one; the resigned indifference *à la Muselmann* is coextensive with the beastly active acceleration, bifurcating the political subject. Everyone (and no one) is a beastly sovereign and a sovereign beast torn between indecisive decision and decisive indecision.

Among the multiple consequences of hyper-sovereignty, two stand out. First, the sacred king’s identity with the sacrificial victim is legally defined in the figure of the persecutor. In a series of lectures on *Truth and Juridical Forms*, Foucault observes that the juridical system of the early Middle Ages was revolutionized with the emergence of the persecutor as the representative of the sovereign, who “was injured by the mere fact that an offense or a crime had occurred.” This development in the European jurisprudence involved the state in the criminal system, in which the notion of infraction on the ubiquitous sovereign has come to gradually replace the victim (*Power* 42).

Hyper-sovereignty conceptualized in the juridical sense of the term multiplies the relations of sovereignty *ad infinitum*, while the distance that opens up the critical space for a juridical decision is perpetually erased. Under the guise of a dispassionate

and objective system of justice, the persecutor ensures that the infraction, which is a personal injury done to the sovereign “by the mere fact that an offense or a crime had occurred,” is avenged. The reactive affect that drives revenge (Nietzsche, *Genealogy* 48) places the sovereign beast back into the position of a resentful animal, effectively problematizing the notion of sovereignty. The infinite relations of hyper-sovereignty inundate the ubiquitous body of the sovereign that appears to be content-less and merely formal, when—like everyone else and with everyone else—the persecutor demands revenge for the infraction. Perhaps the only vestige of the beastly sovereignty and violent generosity beyond revenge that remains today in the system of justice is the “space of exception” allotted to the official pardon, but even pardon is steeped in a complex network of reactive affects and interests.

The second, and more recent, manifestation of hyper-sovereignty is, what Baudrillard terms, the viral proliferation of terrorism. The terrorist is the contemporary incarnation of the beast within the nexus formed by the anthropocentric/colonial discourses of the human and the empire, or better yet, of the self-proclaimed humane empire, the United States. Whether identified as the “brutal dictators” of rogue states, or as the “evil-doers” of the World Trade Center attack, the terrorists are classified as the extreme case of the “disturbers of peace” and “outlaws of humanity” (Schmitt 79). As such, the argument goes, they deserve to be tamed by the virtuous imperial *men*, carrying the light of democracy into the unenlightened and barbaric Orient.

The insertion of the terrorist into Girard’s theory of the monstrous double inherits from this theory the monster’s resistance to classification, for there is no stable difference to separate different types of terrorism from one another. Where there is pure indeterminacy, there is no space left for typologies, differentiations, etc. What remains in this space is the frantic interchange of differences between the ostensibly opposed parties whose unrecognized reciprocity hinges upon the attribution of evil to the other side. “The Bush administration has repeatedly couched the present conflict as one between the forces of good and evil, much as bin Laden has done” (Mandel 105). In the end, terrorism epitomizes the enemy that “blithely ignores all barriers between inside and outside” (Girard 165), contaminating the body of the sovereign with the irreducible foreign presence. The terrorist awakens the old fears of demonic possession by the beast within and, in this awakening, is indissolubly linked with and transformed into a sacrificial victim. For, what better exemplifies the hyper-sovereign paradox of decisive indecision and indecisive decision, than the debate concerning whether or not a certain passenger who boarded the plane on 9/11 was yet another innocent victim, or a terrorist “evil-doer”?

A pervasive and insidious liberal and neo-liberal meta-narrative has to do with the glory and perfection of the free market system and its derivatives. In the Friedmanesque rendition, for instance, the uninhibited capitalist enterprise maximizes both freedom and democracy insofar as it gives each consumer an opportunity to freely vote on the market with the dollar ballots in her or his possession. The humanizing force of the market is said to salvage “mankind” from its “typical state of [...] tyranny, servitude, and misery” (Friedman 9). This view of the free market as the pinnacle of humanity echoes Adam Smith’s earlier insistence that the “faculties of reason and speech” give rise to the contracts and exchanges “common to all men, and to be found in no other race of animals” (21). Overall, the institution of the market is construed as the embodiment of human, and indeed semi-divine, reason “led by the invisible hand” (292) to further the “progress” and the good of the social whole.

In contrast to its vociferous praises of the free market, liberal political economic theory has little to say on the subject of society before the institutionalization of exchange. The prevailing view is that at this early stage in its history, humanity is not yet truly differentiated from nature, whose “spontaneous hand” (Locke 18) precedes the “invisible hand” of the market. Both the pre-market stage and the transition to market society are often mystified as the obscure and unrepresentable realm of history before signification, for “before exchange, there is nothing but that rare or abundant reality provided by nature” (Foucault, *Order* 208). The emergence of the market is then depicted as a miraculous, if not messianic, *deus ex machina* that immediately civilizes humankind, allegedly opening up the unlimited potential for progress and growth.

What is left out from liberal political economic theory is, precisely, the subterranean development of capitalism as a historical economic form that depends on the bestialization of a significant portion of the population. In *The Great Transformation*, Karl Polanyi traces the origins of capitalism back to the Speenhamland laws and their abolition. The Speenhamland laws of 1795 created a unique safety net that guaranteed steady minimum income to the poor, irrespective of their earnings. According to Polanyi, under Speenhamland, “people had been taken care of as none too precious beasts” (83), at the same time that their motivation to perform the work was eroded. The Poor Law Reform that followed three decades of the “welfare” laws drastically changed the situation and paved the way for the emergence of the competitive labour market—the ineluctable ingredient of industrial capitalist economy. This reform abolished the “right to live” (82) the moment it revoked all minimum income guarantees and left the impoverished labourers at the mercy of their employers.

The significance of the transition from Speenhamland to the Poor Law Reform lies with the sudden change of bestialization regimes, to which the poor were subjected.

From the dependent, more or less well-fed “precious beasts,” workers were converted into ever more dependent *hungry* animals. It is no secret that this transition is substantiated by the writings of the period, such as Townsend’s and Bentham’s tractates. Townsend, in particular, attributes great importance to hunger:

Hunger will tame the fiercest animals, it will teach decency and civility, obedience and subjection, to the most perverse. In general it is only hunger which can spur and goad them [the poor] on to labor; yet our laws have said they shall never hunger [. . .] [L]egal constraint is attended with much trouble, violence, and noise [. . .] whereas hunger is not only peaceable, silent, unremitting pressure, but as the most powerful natural motive to industry and labor, it calls for the most powerful exertions. (qtd. in Polanyi 113).

This passage from Townsend’s *Dissertation* deserves a close reading, if we are to understand the role of hunger in the bestialization of the wage-labourer put in the service of industrial capitalism. First, Townsend asserts that hunger “will tame the fiercest animals,” generating the Nietzschean domesticated, decent, civil, and obedient animals later transcribed into Foucault’s “docile bodies.” Here, hunger is reinterpreted as a disciplinary mechanism on the micro-political scale of the body and its needs—the mechanism that, potentially, renders the existence of the sovereign obsolete. Second, the silent and “peaceable” micro-politics of hunger provides an alternative to the violence of legal constraint. Contrary to Machiavelli’s division between the (lion’s) force and the (fox’s) law, Townsend binds together violence, force, and law, juxtaposing this complicated knot to the internal and “peaceable” coercion emanating from hunger pangs. Third, hunger becomes an incarnation of yet another beast within, whose excessive power renders the struggle against it futile, and whose unremitting pressure can be harnessed in the service of capital accumulation.

While the idea of artificially manufactured scarcity is hardly new, Polanyi’s emphasis on how this idea was applied in the context of the industrial acceleration of production is undeniably original. As a result of this emphasis, Friedman’s praise for the enlargement of the realm of freedom, thanks to self-regulated markets, appears as a conflation of external coercion with coercion in general. Indeed, the well-calculated grip of hunger merely supplanted the tyrannical force of the sovereign, of law, etc. with a more powerful despotism that, in Polanyi’s words, “dwarfed the Leviathan” (164). Like the sovereign, who represents the survival of the state of nature in the political state, hunger stands for the part of nature that persists in the midst of civilization. In effect, it would be more accurate to say that the bestiality of hunger does not simply persist in the medium of civilization, but also undermines this very medium.

To Freud, “civilization” (*Kultur*) is “the whole sum of the achievements and regulations which distinguish our lives from those of our animal ancestors and which serve two purposes—namely to protect men against nature and to adjust their mutual relations” (42). Against the backdrop of this definition, capitalism deploys hunger and, in so doing, blurs the demarcation lines “which distinguish our lives from those of our animal ancestors.” Moreover, instead of protecting men against nature, the Poor Law Reform subjects them to its harshest realities; and instead of adjusting their mutual relations, it lays the groundwork for the class war between the owners of the means of production and the property-less workers. Thus, the foundations of industrial capitalism overturn the Freudian meaning of *Kultur* at the same time that they purportedly teach the workers decency and civility.

Paraphrasing Foucault, one may conclude that the modern man is an animal whose *political economy* places his existence as a living being in question. Nonetheless, the critical point of inflection at which the bestialization of the hungry worker threatens his or her very “existence as a living being” is also the site of a strategic reversal of economic power relations. Without rejecting the brilliance of Marx’s internal critique of capitalism, I would like to consider Sorel’s notion of the general strike as an attempt to redirect the bestiality of the worker against the oppressive system of production and distribution that is responsible for the intensification of his bestiality. In contradistinction to the political strike that aims at the amelioration of the working class’s conditions, the goal of the general strike is to destroy the capitalist regime (Sorel 63). Sorelian destruction is made possible by his refusal of the usual hallmarks of Western humanity, including the parliament, the confused language that circulates in it (110), and the premeditated estimation (68) that characterizes the sobriety of thought. The unmediated proletarian violence bursting through in the general strike discards the rules of the bourgeois class game and eliminates any traces of the political (parliamentary) and economic (productive) complicity between the classes.

Although Sorel painstakingly outlines the differences between the political and the general strikes, he neglects to mention that whereas the former is motivated to a large extent by the workers’ short-term interests, the latter disregards these interests, violating both the proletarian self and the capitalist other. The general strike is directed not only against the beastly economic system of capital, but also against the beast within the proletariat. To assume the uncompromising position of dissatisfaction with anything short of the collapse of the capitalist regime is to be willing to starve to death shortly after the discontinuation of the wages of labour. Indefinitely withholding their labour from the owners of the means of production, the workers bluntly confront the threat of hunger and essentially neutralize it as a disciplinary mechanism. It is as if they

challenge Townsend and his clique to relinquish their elitist efforts to understand proletarian psychology and micro-politics.

Yet, the struggle of the general strikers against the beast within does not mimic the Platonic or Kantian advocacy of self-government. The permanent strike does not resemble an ascetic fast, in which the shamelessly desiring flesh is mortified. Rather, it is a part of an active class war abhorring the loss of class energy and devoid of hatred and “the spirit of revenge” (106). It demonstrates that the workers will not be tamed and turned into the reactive civilized animals seeking to avoid hunger at any cost. Thus, the battle with the beast within coincides with the overall bestialization of the active worker, who abandons the capitalist system of signification and becomes a jubilant monster ready to dance on the smoldering ruins of Capital.

In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche recognizes the subversive potential of hunger fearlessly embraced in the general strike: “The normal dissatisfaction of our drives, e.g., hunger [. . .] contains in it absolutely nothing depressing; it works rather as an agitation of the feeling of life, as every rhythm of small, painful stimuli strengthens it” (370). Whereas capitalism ensures that this feeling of life, *anima*, is crushed under the weight of alienated labour and the disciplinary fear of starvation, Sorel contends that the general strike (with all the deprivations it entails) recharges the vital class energy that feeds on the Nietzschean notion of life. This positivity of the negation parallels the Levinasian revolutionary movement “beyond essence,” as the existent’s disinterestedness in the *conatus essendi* (Levinas 4). The beastly strikers are more active than activity; they are on “the hither side” of being and of the desire to persevere in being. Without the worker’s *conatus*, the capitalist calculations lose their implicit point of reference and the entire system is thrown at the mercy of the violent “irrationality” of the general strike.

What is a manifesto? A composite of the Latin *manus* (hand) and *festus* (able to be seized), it is praxis: the deed, or act of violently and forcefully seizing what has been taken away. The manifesto is a manifestation of the will to power not as a “being,” but as a “doing” that drives, wills, and effects (Nietzsche, *Genealogy* 25). It is an active, forward-looking endeavour to narrate the violence of acts and the acts of violence—the endeavour that necessarily fails because words are insufficient for this task. The author of the manifesto is bound to run out of breath narrating the inarticulable. Yet, the manifesto must be manifested, if only for the sake of probing the boundaries of the possible and the limits of the attainable. It is neither an instructive blueprint, nor a guiding manual; rather, it is the act of writing itself—everything that happens between the first seizure of the pen by the hand of the writer and the last stroke it signs on the blank page.

As a precipitous theoretical practice, the beastly manifesto posits urgent ethical demands in a manner that resonates with Foucault's exposition of ethics for a non-fascist life. Grounded in the Nietzschean playfulness of/with knowledge instead of Truth (*Anti-Oedipus* xiv), it nonetheless moves into the sphere of extreme gravity where both the notion of the political and what Foucault calls "the art of living counter to all forms of fascism" (xiii) are at stake. The open-ended goal of this manifesto is not to admit the previously excluded bestialized less-than-subjects into the various totalities under consideration via a restoration of their rights (xiv), but to burst these totalities and to turn them inside out, exposing the inside to the outside. Above and beyond the liberal politics of circumspect hospitality extended to the neutralized, animalized, non-threatening beasts, I wish to invite political theory and practice to a direct confrontation with their own suppressed underside and to develop actions, thoughts, and desires (xiii) in the unbounded territory of the beast.

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MICHAEL MARDER is a PhD candidate in Philosophy at the New School for Social Research in New York. His articles on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Continental philosophy have appeared in *Postmodern Culture*, *Telos*, *Clio*, *Epoché*, and other journals.

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